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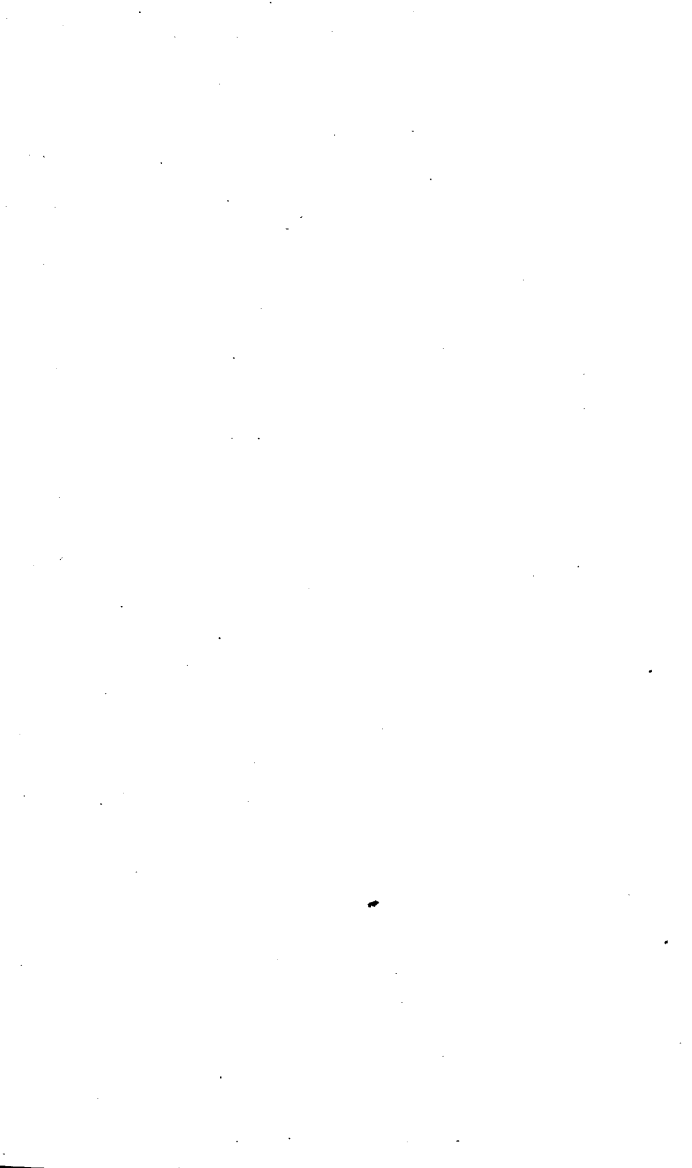
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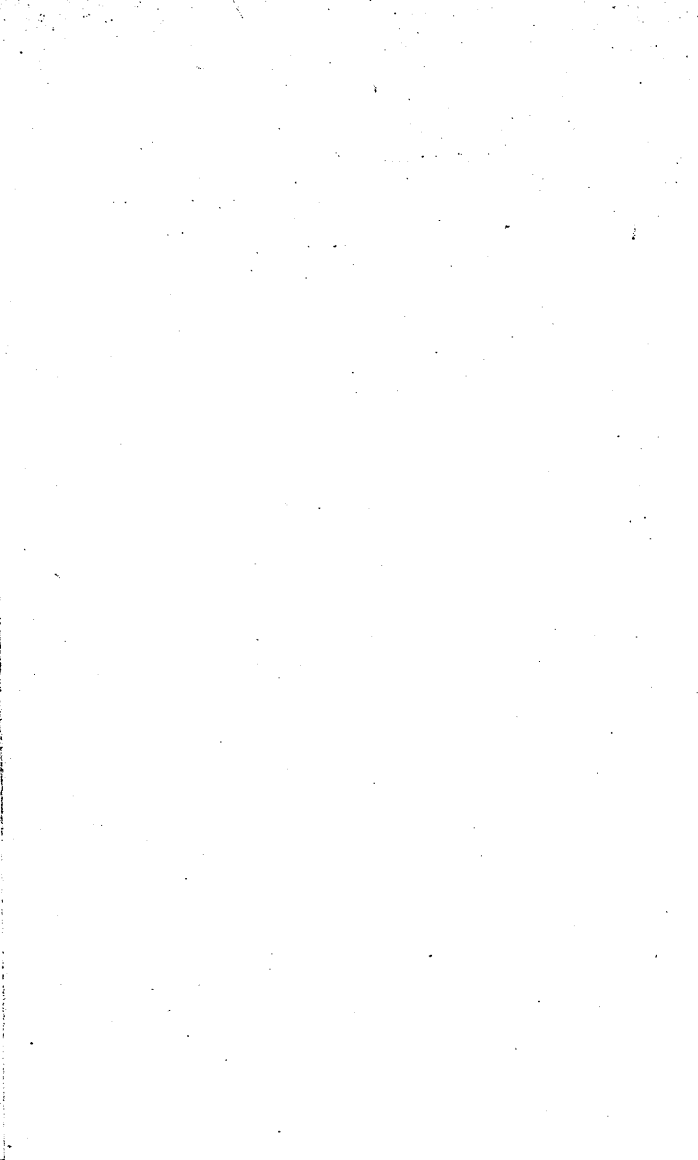
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PART I.

First Year's Course.

LESSON I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Old Testament is a collection of separate books, bearing a variety of names, and written by a number of different persons at different times. At least one thousand years passed away between the writing of the earliest and that of the latest book. Abraham had no Bible at all, Joshua had only the five books of Moses, and when David was born the Psalms and the Proverbs had yet to be written. It was not till after the return from the Captivity, that the Jews at length possessed the Old Testament as we know it now. It was then collected, probably by Ezra, into one volume, which was known to the Jews under the title of "The Holy Scriptures."¹ For the sake also of convenience of reference, they were accustomed to classify the several books under three heads or divisions:—"the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms."²

The Jews regarded their Bible with the greatest reverence, as "the Oracles of God."³ They read it regularly in the synagogues, and its contents, as the many references in the New Testament plainly shew, were well known amongst all classes of the people.

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

² Luke xxiv. 44.

³ Rom. iii. 2.

Those who wrote the Old Testament spake, as St. Peter says, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."¹ This gave to their writings an unity of purpose, so that there is a common thread running through them all. The promise made to Eve was that her "Seed should bruise the serpent's head."² How God prepared the way for the fulfilment of this promise is unfolded to us in the Old Testament. Its writings, from the first book to the last, "testify of Jesus Christ," and "speak of things concerning Him." They reveal to us beforehand His Person and Work, His Sufferings and His Glory.

The first five books of the Old Testament were written almost entirely by Moses, about fifteen centuries before Christ, and were given by him to the Israelites when he formed them, under God's direction, into a nation. These five books were originally but one book. They were divided afterwards into five, and the names by which we know these five divisions were given to them by the men who translated the Old Testament into Greek, in the third century before Christ. These men also gave to the whole work the name of "Pentateuch," or "The Book of five parts or volumes," which name we still use.

Moses wrote his book by God's command,³ and when completed, he delivered it to the care of the priests, who were to read it publicly before all the people once in seven years, and when there came to be a king, he was to have a copy to his special use, and "to read therein all the days of his life."⁴ It was to be placed beside the Ark, for a witness.

¹ 2 Peter i. 21.

³ Exod. xvii. 14.

² Gen. iii. 15.

⁴ Deut. xxxi. 9, 10, xvii. 18, 19.

In composing those parts of his book which tell of events of which he was not himself an eye-witness, Moses doubtless made use of earlier writings at that time in existence;¹ and, in some cases, he probably had a direct revelation from God of what had happened before.

The five books include the history of the whole period from the creation to the death of Moses, immediately before the entrance of the Israelites into the Promised Land. Having given an account of the creation, they tell us of man's fall, and God's promise. Then, by the light of the New Testament, we are to see how the chief concern of Moses is to trace the course of the family, and afterwards of the nation, from whom the Messiah should spring. First, we have Abel, and when he is murdered, then Seth and his descendants down to Noah. Then, after Noah, the descent is traced through Shem to Abraham. In his person we have the direct ancestor of the Promised Seed according to the flesh. Hence the history becomes for a time more personal; but the stream gradually widens again till it becomes the history of a mighty nation and people. Of surrounding families and nations we are told only so much as will serve to shew in what relation they stood to the chosen people, and when all connexion between them and the Israelites is at an end, they simply drop out of the narrative.

The characters of the persons brought before us by Moses, both of the good people and the bad, are full of instruction to us. In Abel, Noah and Abraham, in Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, in Moses himself, and in several

¹ These writings seem to have survived for a long time. Thus we find no record in the Pentateuch of the battle mentioned in 1 Chron. vii. 21.

others, we see what a noble thing faith in God is, and how it elevates and lifts up a man, and enables him to resist temptations, and to live as "seeing Him Who is invisible." In Cain, in Esau and in Balaam, as well as in others, sad examples are given us of how men may despise God's good gifts, and may even use them for bad and wicked purposes.

Moreover, in these books of Moses we have terrible instances of the power of sin and of evil passions to alienate men from God : and yet, on the other hand, we have the mercy and the love of God brought out in many ways—especially perhaps in His dealings with the children of Israel in the wilderness.

If we read carefully, we shall well understand how all these things happened as "ensamples unto us," and shall find these sacred pages full of life and instruction.

The purpose of this Manual is not to supersede the reading of the Sacred Scriptures themselves, but rather to be a kind of running commentary. Hence it is not intended to note every event recorded, but rather to draw out the general lesson of God's scheme of mercy in sending His dear Son into the world ; and, if it please God, to excite in the mind of the young reader a desire to read and study for himself.

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things in Thy law."

LESSON II.

THE CREATION.

Read Gen. i. and ii. to v. 4.

SPEAKING generally, we may say that the purpose of the Pentateuch is to reveal how God made man originally "very good," "in His own image"; and how, after man's fall, God entered into *covenant* with a chosen seed, promising, out of that chosen seed, to develop a scheme of redemption, whereby all the nations of the earth might be blessed.

But first, by way of preface to his work, Moses was inspired to reveal the all-important truth, that this Covenant God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was in very deed none other than the Creator of this universe.

Thus at the very outset Moses forbade and precluded the notion that God and Nature are two independent powers.

Without a deep underlying conviction of the identity of the Lord of Nature and the Lord of Grace no religion in the true sense of the word—no religion that shall sustain a man in the hour of death—is possible.

The first chapter of Genesis is an inspired certificate of that identity.

But besides this great purpose, Moses had in this opening chapter a subordinate purpose, specially

concerning his own people : to lift up the Hebrew people, degraded by long years of slavery, above the low and debased forms of worship which they had been accustomed to see practised by the Egyptians, and into which they had most probably fallen themselves.¹ They were to be made a nation of, and as a first step they must learn true thoughts about God. They had seen the Egyptians worshipping various animals, and paying reverence to rivers, hills, and trees—the nature in fact which surrounded them. But these things were not God, nature was not God, but God had made it and them; they were His servants, to do His will. This was the lesson that Moses was inspired to teach the Israelites;—all things existing for God's pleasure and depending upon Him.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In these few and very simple words, Moses teaches the Israelites the true source and origin of all things. Then he passes on to speak of the earth, and how it was prepared for the habitation of man.² “And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” Vast ages, thousands of years, elapsed, no doubt, between the time of the first verse and that of the second. What happened during that long space of time we cannot tell, nor does it concern us to know. Of this we may be sure, that during all that space there were angels and archangels praising and adoring God, and doing His will. At last God determined to fit the earth, which was “without form and void,” for man's habitation.³ The

¹ “Moses, in the history of the creation, designed to lead the rude and carnal people of the Jews from things sensible and obvious to the invisible things of God.” BP. BULL, *State of Man before the Fall*.

² Gen. i. 2.

³ Cf. Isa. xxxiv. 11.

second verse takes up the history at this point. All is darkness. But the work of God had begun. "The SPIRIT of GOD was moving upon the face of the waters." The word translated "moving", means fluttering or brooding like a bird over her young.¹ Then "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." That light had existed before, we may well believe, for "God dwelleth in the Light which no man can approach unto," and we know from the book of Job,² that stars existed long before the creation of the world. But no light had ever reached this earth; it lay enveloped in a thick impenetrable curtain of vapour. Then God spoke, and the veil was sufficiently thinned for the light to reach the earth; and God saw the light that it was good. The first great step in the work of preparation was accomplished; the evening and the morning were the first day. It was the first day³ of the Divine week of creation, corresponding therefore to the first day of the Christian week, on which a new light shone upon men's souls by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. The vapours and mist which surrounded the earth have been partially dispersed. Light has been let in.

The next step, the work of the second day, is the separation of these mists and vapours from the actual waters of the ocean. This is expressed by the words: "God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." The word translated fir-

¹ See Deut. xxxii. 11, where the same word is used.

² Job xxxviii. 7.

³ What the word *Day* may mean we cannot tell, possibly a long period of time: compare ii. 4, 17; John viii. 56; Rom. xiii. 12.

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firmament means really an expansion. It expresses the clearing of a great space between the clouds which gathered above and the ocean waters that gathered below. This firmament or expansion God called Heaven. By this is meant, not the heaven where God especially dwells, but rather the atmosphere surrounding the earth in which the clouds float and the birds fly. We talk of the birds and clouds of heaven. We may include too in our thought of the heaven that which we call the sky. To a child the sun, moon and stars appear to be set in the sky, and the whole to move round the earth; but we know that really it is the earth that is moving. The ancient Hebrew did not know this, and Moses therefore describes it all to him in a way which he could understand, just as we still speak in the same manner of the sun rising and setting. In this firmament or expanse, then, the vapours and mists which before rested on the earth now floated as clouds. They are the waters which are above the firmament.

The next step in the preparation of the earth for the dwelling of man is the shrinking together into ocean-beds of the waters which were upon the earth.¹ Previously they seem to have covered the earth, but now the dry land appears. It is called by God EARTH, and the gathered waters are called SEAS.² As the earth, which existed before, but only now appears, dries, it brings forth at God's command the tender grass, the seed-bearing herb, and the fruit-yielding tree.³ This production of vegetable life concluded the work of the third day.

¹ Gen. i. 9.

² Psa. xxiv. 2, cxxxvi. 6; 2 Peter iii. 5.

³ Geology tells us that the sea teemed with zoophytes and shell-fish before land plants were created. This may well be; but Moses speaks only of what would be visible to one permitted to see it all as *in a vision*.

On the fourth day a new scene opens. The sun for the first time breaks through the curtain of cloud, and the earth, green with vegetation, is warmed and heated by his rays. So at night-time the firmament glowed with the moon and the stars.¹ Now at length "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork."²

The earth is now fitted for animal life, and so on the fifth day the command goes forth—"Let the waters bring forth abundantly, the moving creature which hath life, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." In obedience to this command the waters teem with reptiles and the air is filled with winged creatures, insects and birds. The "whales" of ver. 21 is a mis-translation: the word really means "sea-monsters;" and may be applied also to such creatures as crocodiles.³ It was on this fifth day that God first blessed the work of His hands (ver. 22), and bid them "be fruitful and multiply." It was repeated and enlarged on the sixth day, when God blessed man.

The last day of the creation has now arrived. The light of the first day is supplemented by the sun, the moon and the stars of the fourth; the separation of the waters, and the making the firmament on the second day, is followed by the creation of fishes and birds on the fifth; the clothing of the earth with vegetation prepares it for beast and for man on the sixth. On this last day, the fair earth is filled with inhabitants; first, with what we call the brute creation, and then with man. The animals are divided into three classes:—the cattle, *i.e.* the grass-eating domestic

¹ Compare Dan. xii. 3; MILTON, *Par. Lost*, iv.

² Psal. xix. 1; Job xxxviii. 7. ³ As in Isa. li. 9; Ezek. xxix. 3.

animals; the reptiles, such as lizards, worms, and the like, including also the smaller animals, such as mice, etc.; and the beast of prey, the fierce denizen of the forest. When all these have been created, the account of man's creation is given. It is introduced by God being represented as taking counsel with Himself as to man's formation. And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." This is intended to shew us the dignity of man. He alone of all created things is made in the image of God, and capable of holding communion with God. To him alone is given an immortal soul; he alone possesses the power of choosing between the good and the evil, and therefore he alone is responsible for his actions. For this being, created thus pure and holy, an opportunity is to be given of more especial converse with God. God rested on the seventh day from all His work, which he had looked upon and pronounced to be very good. So in the human week as in the divine week a day of rest is given. From henceforth the day of rest was to be consecrated to God—an opportunity given to man to enter more consciously into God's presence, to meditate upon Him, and to contemplate Him in His glorious works.¹

¹ Mark ii. 27.

LESSON III.

ADAM AND THE FALL.

Read Gen. ii. 4 to end, and iii.

WITH the fourth verse of the second chapter Moses begins an account of the adaptation of a portion of the earth for man's special dwelling-place. Then he passes on to the sad history of the Fall, and the forfeiture of that beautiful abode. He, in very few words, sums up what has been already stated about the creation. But, in doing so, we cannot fail to see that he no longer speaks of "God" simply, but of the "Lord God" or "JEHOVAH ELOHIM,"¹ as the Hebrew words are. A great deal has been written and said about this change. We need only now remember that in chap. i. to ii. 3 Moses has been speaking of God in His relation to the universe at large, but now he is about to shew the special relation existing between Him and man. He therefore uses that name of God by which the Israelites, for whom he was writing, had learned to know God, and to believe in Him as One Who cared for them, and was full of loving-kindness and tender mercy.

From the dust of the ground the Lord God forms man, and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life,

¹ It should be borne in mind that wherever the word Lord is put in our English Bibles for Jehovah, it is always printed in capital letters, LORD.

gives him that which He had not given to the lower animals. The gift raised man above those over whom he was to have dominion, and made of him a responsible being, implanting within him that which we call his "spirit." For the dwelling-place of the man, the Lord God prepared a garden, bringing together perhaps into a smaller space those plants and vegetables fitted for man's food which were scattered over a large portion of the earth's surface. The position of this garden is said to be "eastward in Eden." There was a river which watered it, rising somewhere in Eden, but not in the garden, and then apparently, after flowing through the garden, parted into four heads, each of which had its own name. Every tree pleasant to the sight and good for food was planted in the garden, and in addition two special trees—the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What are we to learn from the mention of these two trees? They are described as both placed "in the midst of the garden," as if to shew that they were precious above all the other trees. What precisely we are intended to understand by "The Tree of Life" we cannot say; enough that it was to Adam a Sacrament of Eternal Life;¹—an outward visible sign by which God was pleased to convey to him His gift of Eternal Life. We may see in it a sign and prefigurement of the divine life which we Christians were hereafter to find in our Saviour Jesus Christ. To Adam, therefore, the taste of its fruit gave hope for the future. Long, long afterwards, it helped the wise King Solomon to a lesson. "Wisdom," he says, "is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her."² It reappears, too, in the

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE, *de Gen.* viii. 8.

² Prov. iii. 18.

New Jerusalem (Rev. xxii. 2). It must have taught Adam that his life depended upon God, and not upon himself.

The other tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, was to be the test of man's obedience. There may have been in this tree a special virtue, by which, if its fruit were partaken of, a knowledge not before possessed would be gained. But others¹ suppose that the knowledge was not in the tree itself, or in its fruit, but in the trial to which man was put by its means. God said to Adam, "Thou shalt not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." As long as Adam obeyed this command of God, he would know nothing of evil. But the moment he broke it, he would understand that EVIL was really disobedience to God's will, and GOOD obedience to it.

Moreover, if he broke God's command, he was to die. Did he understand the meaning of this threatened punishment? He must have done so. The lower animals were already subject to death long before man was created. Adam therefore would understand that, if he disobeyed God, he would, instead of living on in a state of immortality, become subject to that same law which he saw imposed on the animals around him.

There were these two trees then planted together in the midst of the garden. The eating of the one would give life—the eating of the other death. It has ever since been thus. Good and evil, life and death, are always very near together. As Adam was free then, so are we free now to make our choice. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." It is a matter of obedience. To obey is life and liberty, to disobey is

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE, *de Gen.* viii. 12.

slavery and death. "I will walk at liberty, because I seek Thy commandments."¹ "Whoso committeth sin is the slave of sin."²

Adam was thus placed in a position of trial and probation. In his state of holiness there would be no temptation to those sins to which we are continually being tempted. But, seeing himself superior to all the created things around him, Adam might be tempted to think that he could be independent of God. As a test therefore of his obedience, and to teach him that he had been created to do God's will, and not his own, he was commanded not to eat of the fruit of one of those two trees in the midst of the garden. How he broke this command we shall see presently.³

Meanwhile, in order to shew Adam that He had really given him power over the animals, God brings them to him to see what he would call them, and to train his faculties of speech and observation.

There was another step yet wanting to complete the

¹ Psa. cxix. 45.

² John viii. 34.

³ "There was a Covenant of Life," says Bishop Bull, "made with man in his state of innocence, and not only a law imposed upon him. . . . The prohibition given to Adam concerning the not eating of the tree of knowledge is ushered in with this express donation or grant of God, that he might freely eat of all the rest of the trees in Paradise, the tree of life not excepted. Now it is certain the tree of life was so called because it was either a sacrament and divine sign, or else a natural means of immortality: that is, because he that should have used it would (either by the natural virtue of the tree itself continually renew the decays of Nature, or else by the power of God) have lived for ever, as God Himself plainly assures us. So that the sense of this whole legislation to Adam is apparently this: 'If thou shalt obey My commandment in not eating of the tree of knowledge, thou mayest continue in Paradise, and freely enjoy all the other delights thereof, not being debarred from the tree of life itself, which thou mayest eat of, and live for ever: but if thou transgress this My commandment, in eating of the tree of knowledge, thou shalt certainly die.'" *State of Man before the Fall.*

whole tale of creation. When the lower animals were created, God had made them male and female, but He created man alone, by himself. "For Adam (the man) there was not found an help meet for him."¹ Yet it was not good for him to be alone. Therefore "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made He a woman, and brought her unto the man."² The creation (or building) of woman from the side of man was totally unlike any other recorded act of creation. It seems that, after it was over, God revealed to Adam what He had done during the time of that deep sleep. Adam's observation, when the woman is brought unto him, shews this. "This is now bone of my bone," he says, "and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman" (Ishah), "because she was taken out of man" (Ish). Adam was thus taught the close relationship between man and woman, and received his first lesson in kindness, gentleness and love. The sacred tie of marriage began in Eden. The words which consecrated it then in those first days were afterwards adopted by our Blessed Lord, and used by Him to enforce His lesson—"What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."³

The man's happy condition at the first.—With the close of the second chapter a beautiful and happy impression is left on our minds. Nothing has yet happened to mar the "very good" which was pro-

¹ It is a very common mistake to use the two words "help" and "meet" as if they were one word, "help-meet." Meet means "fitted for." There is a confusion made between "help-meet" and "helpmate."

² Gen. ii. 21, 22; "made," lit. builded.

³ Gen. ii. 24; Matt. xix. 5; Mark x. 9.

nounced at the end of the sixth day. Earth is as yet the abode of innocence and purity. The man and his wife know no sin. Yet they are in a state of trial. If they pass through it without failing, there will be no painful transition, but a peaceful and joyful exchange of the life on this earth for a life in heaven; but if they fail, then pain and suffering must ensue; death, being a punishment, will be painful, for it will be the wages of sin.¹

An enemy at work.—How long the state of innocence lasted we are not told. There was an enemy at work. The Sacred Scriptures reveal to us an order of beings higher than man, of whom some fell through pride from their first estate of high purity and holiness.² These, because they delight in marring and spoiling God's beautiful work, become man's enemies, and their leader, Satan, or The Adversary, as his name implies, tries to compass man's fall. He could only have done this by God's sanction.³ But the command to Adam would have been no trial had there been no temptation to break it.

And, as in later times the evil spirits asked leave to enter into the swine, so now the Evil One entered into the glittering serpent, and seemed to speak by his mouth. Had he appeared to Eve in his own true nature, he knew she would have recoiled from him in horror. He chose the form of the serpent, because, as the Bible says, "he was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." The object of

¹ This is the view of most of the ancient Fathers of the Church, who clearly saw that man, possessing a body needing food for its support, would of necessity be liable to a change. Sin made that change painful.

² Jude 6; John viii. 44; 2 Pet. ii. 4; 1 John iii. 8; 1 Tim. iii. 6.

³ Job i. 12, ii. 6.

the Tempter was to stir in the woman's mind a feeling of discontent at the restriction placed upon them by God, and to awaken a desire for independence of God. He tried to make the woman fancy that it was out of jealousy that God had given the command. "God doth know," he said, "that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods" [or rather as God], "knowing good and evil." In yielding to the temptation, and eating of the fruit which was pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise, the woman set an example that her children have been only too prone to follow. The temptation to explore good and evil is *the* temptation which besets youth. It is the desire to be independent of control, and to exercise one's own free will. The world is fresh; there are many things which we know to be wrong, and from which we may have hitherto been kept and shielded. Then Satan tempts us. And as the woman fell, so do we. A thing looks good and pleasant. The echo comes from Paradise, "Ye shall not surely die;" the forbidden fruit is tasted. The knowledge is gained, but the price is dear.¹

The woman and her husband yield.—When the woman had tasted, and her husband also, to whom she gave of the fruit, "the eyes of them both were opened." The Tempter had spoken truly; there is always some truth in what he says. Their hearts were now oppressed with the sense of sin and guilt. They knew evil, but it was to find themselves its slaves. Their very bodies partook of the sense of shame which had come upon them. They sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons. And

¹ James i. 14, 15.

why? Because they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the midst of the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid themselves, because they were naked, and were afraid. Thus sin always tries to hide itself before God.¹

We must always understand, when we read in the Bible of God's Voice, of God's Hand, of His looking and reflecting upon what He has done, of His repenting, and the like, that this language is used because we have none other than these human words. God has not really a hand or an eye, for He is without body, parts or passions,² but we are obliged to speak of Him as if He had, for only thus could we express our thoughts about Him. We are obliged to picture the Unseen by means of the Seen.

God's sentence on the act of disobedience.—Adam and his wife try in vain to hide themselves from God amidst the trees of the garden. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee,"³ said our Lord to Nathanael. So with our first parents. God saw them, though they fancied themselves concealed from His sight. And God said, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" O terrible Voice! bringing sin home to the guilty, and making him confess to the act of disobedience. Adam's answer to the Lord God's question is just what we might expect from one still young in sin. He did what children and even others are so ready to do now, He threw the

¹ Compare St. Peter's conduct after his denial, John xxi. 7, and see Rev. vi. 16.

² Article I.

³ John i. 48.

blame on another. "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

And the woman, too, follows her husband's example. "The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

How true to the life ! Our circumstances, our position, our friends ;—we lay the blame upon anything rather than the real cause, our own misconduct.

Then comes the answer from God. And first to the Serpent. The curse upon him is twofold ;—against the animal which has been made the vehicle of the temptation, and against the real doer of the mischief, the Tempter of mankind. We need not suppose that the serpent underwent any change of bodily shape, but that the sentence uttered against it signified its utter and perpetual degradation, and the loathing with which it should ever be regarded by man.¹ By the seed of the Serpent we must understand the evil spirits, the angels of the Devil, who are associated with him in the doing of evil.

But with the curse upon the Serpent comes the first note of comfort for the fallen man and woman. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; and It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."²

Then to the woman and the man the Lord God speaks. He does not curse them, but nevertheless the woman's sorrow and pain shall be greatly multiplied, and as for the man, it will only hereafter be by labour

¹ That the brute creation share in the sin of man we have many proofs in the Sacred Scriptures, *e.g.* the ox which gored a man was to be put to death (Exod. xxi. 28) ; the swine were drowned in the waters (Luke viii. 33) ; the fig-tree died (Mark xi. 20). See also Gen. ix. 5 and Rom. viii. 20-22.

² Gen. iii. 15.

and toil on his part that he will be able to obtain from the earth her fruits, and find bread to support his body. Everywhere and always there was to be, henceforth a perpetual struggle against evil. In the end there shall be victory. The Seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head. This was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, "made," as S. Paul says, "of a woman."¹ Thus, though deceived now and vanquished, Adam and his wife are encouraged by the mercy of God to look forward, though it be through much tribulation, to a period of restoration and triumph over their enemy. The Garden of Eden is however no longer a fit habitation for man. By eating of the tree of life man might procure for himself eternal life, which, under the altered condition of things, and until the curse had been done away in Jesus Christ, would be one of unhappiness and sorrow. The Lord God therefore, in pity, clothes Adam and Eve—who now first receives her name, which means "Life"—with skins, and then sends them forth from the garden to till the ground whence they had been taken. The entrance to the garden is guarded by the mysterious cherubim² and the flaming sword, emblems the one of mercy, the other of justice. By and by, in the far off ages, when all things are accomplished and the fulness of time has come, that earthly garden shall be replaced by a heavenly, and instead of being driven from it, "the glory and honour of all nations"³ shall be brought into it; and blessed shall they be who then "have right to the tree of life,"⁴ having done God's commandments.

¹ Gal. iv. 4.

² The root and meaning of this word are quite uncertain.

³ Rev. xxi. 26.

⁴ Rev. xxii. 14.

LESSON IV.

CAIN AND ABEL—NOAH AND THE DELUGE.

Read Gen. iv. to ix.

WHEN Adam and Eve were driven from the garden, they do not seem to have wandered far,¹ but to have remained still in Eden. Here sons and daughters were born to them.² Three of these are selected for special mention, Cain, Abel and Seth. The reason of this is plain. As we go on we shall see how, throughout the Old Testament, there is always kept in view the thought of the Promised Seed Who should bruise the Serpent's head. The history is carefully traced, step by step, of the family and the nation through whom the Seed was to come. The thought of the promise was continually in the minds of the Patriarchs; it became the nation's creed; it reached its noblest expression in David and some of the Prophets, and then for a period it waned. Yet the thought never left the pious members of the Jewish nation. Their eyes were continually looking forward, and when at last the Seed came in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord, the aged Simeon exclaimed, as he took the Holy Child into his arms, "Lord, now lettest

¹ Compare Gen. iv. 16.

² Gen. v. 4.

Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen **THY SALVATION.**"¹

Side by side with this thought of the Promised Seed there seems to run, more or less constantly, another thought. It is that of the dominion which Satan obtained in the world. It is as if the sin, the violence and the corruption which pervaded the world were continually witnessing to the need for the Promised Seed, and the intense longing that the Seed should come. Hence we find the history of those persons given most fully, who either by their sin shewed forth the terrible power which Satan had acquired, and therefore the need of a Redeemer, or who by the circumstances of their birth, or by their holy lives, seemed to shadow forth, and even in some faint measure to realize, the idea of Him for Whom all were longing. We find these latter referred to in the New Testament as having thus prefigured or foreshadowed the true Redeemer. Hence we call them types (or patterns) of Jesus Christ, that is, in some particular or other they were like Him, though not in every respect. Thus Melchizedek as a priest is a type of our Blessed Lord; so Moses as a lawgiver and prophet, David as a king.

With this thought in our minds, we see at once that Cain, Abel and Seth are selected for mention from among the children of Adam and Eve, because Cain was the first great example, after the Fall, of Satan's power over man, Abel of faith and obedience and suffering for righteousness' sake, and Seth because he was the ancestor of that family and nation out of whom the Seed was to spring.

¹ Luke ii. 29, 30.

When Cain was born, Eve no doubt thought the Promised Seed was already come, for she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," and she called his name Cain, which means "gotten" or "acquired." As time passed on, however, she appears to have felt she was mistaken, for when a second son was born, she called him Abel, or "vanity," as if her hope were gone.

After an interval of probably more than one hundred years,¹ Cain and Abel met to offer unto the LORD of their substance. Abel offered his in faith,² Cain did not, and so the Lord had respect to Abel and his offering, but not to Cain and his offering.

The rejection of his offering awoke in Cain a feeling of jealousy towards his brother, and in a fit of uncontrollable anger he slew Abel. Convinced of his sin by God, he is driven from his home; and with a terrible curse from God upon him, he leaves Eden, travels eastward, and settles in the land of Nod.³ Here a son is born to him, and to commemorate his birth he founds a city, probably little more than a collection of mud huts, and calls it Enoch after his son.⁴

The dwelling of men in cities necessitates a variety of contrivances unknown to a wandering life. Accordingly, amongst Cain's descendants, we find in the invention of musical instruments and of metal working the signs of considerable progress in civilization.⁵ But there are signs too of license and violence. In the marriage of two wives by Lamech we find the first

¹ Gen. iv. 25 seems to imply that the murder of Abel took place very shortly before the birth of Seth.

² Gen. iv. 4, 5; Heb. xi. 4, 13.

³ The position of this is quite uncertain.

⁴ Gen. iv. 17; Ps. xlix. 11.

⁵ So perhaps we may in the names of their women:—Naamah = pleasant; Adah = beauty; Zillah = shadow.

tokens of the low estimate of women in eastern countries, and in Lamech's address to his wives is revealed a lawless and unhappy condition of society.

In the place of Abel, the righteous one,¹ who bore witness for God, and whose martyr-blood speaks still from the earth,² God gave Adam and Eve another son, Seth.³

One of Seth's descendants was Enoch, whose faith is spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It shewed itself in a holy life, and so God translated him, without dying, into heaven.⁴ The promise was bearing fruit.

At the birth of Noah, whose name means rest, we again have an indication that men were resting in the hope of the Promised Seed. There was something probably, of which we are not told, about Noah's birth which gave his father renewed courage in labouring and toiling upon the ground which "The LORD" had cursed. This son was destined, Lamech thought, to be the vanquisher of the enemy, and remover of the curse. At any rate we cannot help being struck by the contrast between the two Lamechs, Cain's descendant and Seth's. They probably lived about the same time. About the one there is the defiant tone of one who felt himself in the possession of wealth and power. Science and art were bringing round him their comforts: there is no note of toil or of suffering in his words. How different with the other! Nothing is said about any advance in knowledge or civilization. Living perhaps, as Abel must have done, a wandering nomadic life, he has, it may be, no settled home; har-

¹ Matt. xxiii. 35; Heb. xi. 4, xii. 24.

² Heb. xi. 4, xii. 24.

³ *i.e.* The one who is set, or put, in the place of another.

⁴ Heb. xi. 5.

vests perhaps have failed, scarcely with all his "work and toil of his hands" can he earn enough, it would seem, to live; every day brings to his remembrance the curse uttered in Eden; his life is one of sorrow, and yet full of faith. While his namesake is vaunting his strength and power of taking vengeance, resting in his own might, this Lamech takes refuge in God's promise—he looks to Him for comfort, and when his son is born, he is God's gift of consolation to him, and will give him rest.

Faith thus lingered amidst a world which was sinking into an irreclaimable state of wickedness. "It was corrupt before God, and filled with violence." Only one family of all the descendants of Adam still remained faithful to the true God. There was a general overthrow of morality. It came by degrees, not all at once. The first two verses of the sixth chapter carry us back to comparatively early days. Deeds of violence¹ produced their fruit. The sacred writer depicts a scene of degradation such as the earth has perhaps never seen since. At last the iniquity of men became full. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that He had made man, and it grieved Him at His heart." But even yet, before the Holy Spirit ceases to strive with men, there shall be an hundred and twenty years' longer probation. Nor is God left without a witness. Noah, Lamech's son, whose birth

¹ The words "They took them wives of all whom they chose" imply this. The word also rendered "giant" might be more forcibly translated "plunderers," "robbers." It only occurs here and in Numb. xiii. 33. It is quite a different word from those rendered "giant" in such passages as Deut. iii. 11; Josh. xv. 8; Psal. xix. 5 (Prayer Book version).

had been hailed with so much joy, became "a preacher of righteousness."¹ He, by his just and upright life, found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Of him only, beside Enoch, is it said that he "walked with God." But his preaching was of no avail. "Men went on eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,"² regardless of the warning which Noah by his faith in God gave them. Then came the terrible announcement: "The end of all flesh is come before Me, . . . behold I will destroy them from the earth."³ But Noah and his family are to be spared; the world is to be drowned, but they are to ride safely over the waters, shut up in the ark, which God now instructed him to build. The building of the ark must have taken a long time.⁴ During that time, Noah, as the Apostle says, "condemned the world"⁵ by the faith which he shewed in God's Word. The ark was built of gopher wood, a species of cypress, in the form of a huge chest, probably with a flat bottom and square ends. It was carefully smeared all over with pitch or bitumen, to keep it water-tight. The description is obscure, but there seems to have been a kind of skylight window running along the roof of the ark, affording probably both light and ventilation. The interior was divided into three storeys or floors, and each floor was fitted with cabins, or nests, as the Hebrew word is.⁶

When Noah had stored all necessary food in the ark, and placed the various kinds of animals in it, according

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 5.

² Matt. xxiv. 38; Luke xvii. 26.

³ Gen. vi. 13.

⁴ Though probably not the whole of the 120 years.

⁵ Heb. xi. 7.

⁶ The ark was about 525 ft. long, 90 ft. wide, 55 ft. high. This would give a vessel not so large as the "Great Eastern," but larger than any of the ironclad men-of-war.

to God's instruction, he and his family entered it, and "the LORD shut him in."¹ Then there was a pause for seven days. There is something very striking in that week's interval, as if God were even now unwilling to destroy the ungodly inhabitants of the earth. The week was at last over, and then "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up,² and the windows³ of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. And the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered.⁴ Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." Such is the simple, grand language of the sacred writer. It produces upon us as we read it the sense of profound and utter desolation—nothing to be seen but a wild waste of waters. As far as eye could reach no mountain or hill is visible. There is no cry of human beings, of beasts, or of bird. There is only that one solitary vessel floating on the water.

¹ Gen. vii. 16.

² That is, the sea broke over the land by a subsidence or depression of the latter.

³ Lit. "flood-gates," descriptive of the torrents of rain.

⁴ All round to the horizon. All mankind were drowned; but mankind may not have yet spread over any large portion of the earth; perhaps not beyond the great plain of the Tigris and Euphrates. Compare Deut. ii. 25.

Yet its inmates were not forgotten. God remembered Noah, and all that were with him in the ark.¹ After forty days and nights of ceaseless rain, the land, which must have been sinking, began to rise to its old level. One hundred and ten days are required for evaporation, accelerated by a wind, which God made to pass over the earth, to lessen the depth sufficiently for the ark to take the ground. It seems to have drifted into the country of Ararat or Armenia,² grounding on one of the ranges of hills probably which run through the country. After two more months, the tops of other hills are seen, and then, after a further interval of two months, the dove sent forth by Noah finds rest for the sole of her foot, and Noah removes the covering of the ark. At last, on the twenty-seventh day of the second month of the new year, Noah received God's permission to "go forth of the ark." It was a joyful procession which then streamed out from the vessel of refuge, to take possession of the cleansed and chastened earth. Once more is heard the voice of the Lord God blessing His creation, and telling them to be fruitful and multiply. Noah, with a heart full of gratitude, builds an altar, and acting upon some law with regard to clean and unclean beasts and birds of which we are ignorant, offers of the former burnt-offerings on the altar. "And the LORD smelled," such is the simple language of early history, "a savour of rest, and said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart

¹ Gen. viii. 1.

² Armenia and Ararat are different names for the same country. Compare Gen. viii. 4 with 2 Kings xix. 37 and Isa. xxxvii. 38, where the Hebrew for Armenia is Ararat. Jerome says it was the name of a region, not a mountain.

is evil from his youth." Henceforth there was to be mercy. Man's redemption should be brought about by other means than prevailing waters. For all time, the sun should rise on the evil and on the good; the rain should fall on the just and the unjust; fruitful seasons, succeeding one another, should fill men's hearts with food and gladness.¹ For all time, too, Noah would be the type of righteousness triumphing over sin. Abel typified the Promised Seed by his suffering, but Noah typifies it by his being the instrument of redemption achieved after suffering, whereby the family of man was saved from utter destruction. Moreover, in Noah's accepted sacrifice we see foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice; in the ark we see portrayed not merely the fact of safety in Jesus Christ, but the manner of it. It is a picture of His Church, all the members of which share in the triumph of their Lord, Who—as Noah from the flood, which was the death of the rest of the world,—returned in safety from the grave, rising again from the dead.² And once more, as Noah became the second head of the human family, and a kind of second Adam, and entered into a new covenant with God, so Jesus Christ is the true Second Adam, the real spiritual Head of mankind, through whom, in their baptism, they enter into a new covenant, and become heirs of the promise of restoration to eternal life made dimly and mysteriously to Eve.

God's covenant with Noah is remarkable for the reason which is given for awarding death as the punishment of murder—"In the image of God made he man." This implies that, though by man's fall the

¹ Matt. v. 45; Acts xiv. 17.

² 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.

image of God in him was marred, it yet was not wholly obliterated.

The sign and token of the truth and reality of the covenant was to be the rainbow, an instance (like the sanctification of water and of bread and wine in the Christian Sacraments) of God taking what is well-known and common, and raising it into the sign of some high spiritual truth.

With the account of how Noah became a husbandman, and the indication, in his blessing of Shem and Japheth and his curse upon Canaan,¹ of the future destinies of his sons' descendants, the history of the great Patriarch closes.

¹ The blessing of Shem points to his descendants preserving the worship of Jehovah; that of Japheth to wide dominion, and the acceptance in after days of Shem's faith. Both these, as well as the curse upon Canaan, have been very clearly fulfilled.

LESSON V.

MANKIND AFTER THE FLOOD— ABRAHAM.

Read Gen. xi. to xiv., xxiii., xxv. 7-10.

NOAH lived for 350 years after the Flood, and long before his death his descendants had made their way gradually year after year in a south-easterly direction,¹ until at last they reached the well-watered and fertile plain of Shinar, lying between the great Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and known in after centuries as the land of the Chaldees and Babylonians.

It is not long before the spirit of disobedience again shews itself. Forgetful of God's command to replenish the earth, men plan a tower "whose top should reach to Heaven," hoping it might serve in that flat country as a landmark, and as a kind of magnet, to keep them from wandering far away from one another. The narrative seems, too, to indicate still prouder thoughts. If allowed to go on, "nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do."² So God confounds their language, that they cannot understand one another. And they left off to build the city, which

¹ Gen. xi. 2, where "from the east" should be "eastward," as in the margin.

² Gen. xi. 6.

in memory of the event is called Babel, or "confusion"; and "from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

This history of the dispersion of mankind is very important, because it gives us the account from the Divine side of that wonderful variety of language which prevails in the world, and which may yet be traced, as the latest researches of science tell us, to one source and one primeval tongue. It is perhaps still more important as the first assertion, since God's covenant with Noah, of His moral government over the world. He overrules the mistakes and sins of men to the working out of His own great purposes. This does not make man's sin the less, but it makes God's Providence the more wonderful. As a secondary thing, too, the dispersion of mankind shews us the value of such a list of names as that which is given us in the tenth chapter. Were it not for that list we should be greatly at a loss to know in what directions men were scattered from Babel, and what parts of the earth the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth respectively peopled.

With the dispersion came the necessity for more distinctness with regard to the Promised Seed. The thought of it had never died out. In the worst of times there had always been an Enoch, a Lamech, or a Noah to bear witness for God, and to "confess that they were pilgrims and strangers seeking a country, even an heavenly." But now, with varieties of language, and consequent difficulties of intercourse, there would be a danger of the promise fading away altogether from men's minds. Accordingly, the dim prophecy of Noah, in his blessing of Shem, of the line of the Messiah, is about to receive further development, so that in the

person of Abraham the actual ancestor of the Promised Seed is clearly announced, and the nature of His work distinctly indicated. Slowly and by degrees the veil hanging over the future is lifted, until at last, on the Crucifixion Day, we see the work of the Promised Seed accomplished, and Redemption wrought for man.

Sketch of Abraham's Life.

Abram¹ (as his name was at first) was the youngest of a family consisting of a father and three sons, who lived at Ur of the Chaldees, a city situated, as St. Stephen tells us, in Mesopotamia,² and probably in the lower part of that country which borders on the Persian Gulf. In the general decay of the worship of the true God, in which a portion at any rate of Abram's family shared,³ God singled out Abram, separated him from the idolatrous influences of his early home, and bade him go to a land which He would shew him. Terah, Abram's father, sharing in the desire of his son to emigrate, took all his family with him, except his eldest son Haran, who was already dead, and Nahor, who seems to have stayed behind; and leaving Ur, followed, for the sake of food and pasturage, the course of the Euphrates upwards, until he reached a spot called Haran or Charran, situated in the upland country, in the midst of beautiful hills and fruitful valleys. Here

¹ High or mighty Father.

² The ruins of Mugheir are believed to mark the site. So Canon Rawlinson in *Dict. of Bible*. Dean Stanley, following ancient tradition, identifies it with Orfa or Edessa, on the higher waters of the Euphrates. *Jew. Ch.* i. 6.

³ Josh. xxiv. 2.

Terah died, and Nahor, Abram's remaining brother, who by this time had probably joined¹ the other members of his family at Haran, made it his home. With his father's death the tie which bound Abram to Haran was broken, and, probably within a very short interval, he, accompanied by his nephew Lot, the son of the dead Haran, set forth, with his wife Sarai, and a large concourse of slaves, of camels, asses and sheep, the *substance* of an oriental emir or sheikh, such as Abram was, to fulfil the command of God. Crossing the Euphrates, he must have travelled along the country bordering on the mountains of Lebanon, and passing near Damascus, even then a city, he probably entered Canaan by way of the river Jabbok. "Passing through" the land, he pitched his tent under the ilex or evergreen oak-tree of Moreh, in the place afterwards called Sichern, or Shechem, said to be the most beautiful spot in all Palestine. Abraham² was now treading the soil of that country to which God had called him, and which was to be the inheritance of his descendants. Yet he himself was to be always a sojourner and a stranger in it. At Moreh or Sichern, God a second time speaks to Abraham, promising him the land where he now is, and he, to commemorate the place of the promise, builds an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. This was the first of four places—Moreh, a hill between Bethel and Hai, Mamre or Hebron, and Beersheba—which were rendered sacred by the altars which Abraham built there (or, as in the

¹ See page 33.

² God changed Abram's name to Abraham ("father of a multitude") after he had been in Palestine nearly quarter of a century, and when He announced distinctly to him that Sarah should have a son. Gen. xvii.

last case, by planting a tree or grove of trees), and by his calling there upon the name of Jehovah. The remainder of Abraham's life, nearly one hundred years, was spent almost entirely within the bounds of his adopted country. Once, being driven by famine, he paid a visit to Egypt, even at that early time a well-governed and civilized country. Here he was betrayed, as afterwards in Gerar, in the part of the Promised Land inhabited by the Philistines, into an act of deception. It may be that the fear of a powerful and despotic monarch like the Pharaoh of Egypt broke down for the moment his faith and trust in God. Abraham's life in Palestine was what is called a nomadic one, a life, that is, with no settled dwelling-place, but a passing from one spot to another, as the Arabs do at this day. Abraham removed from one altar-place to another, "walking through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it," receiving at intervals communications from God, growing outwardly in riches, wealth, and honour, inwardly in the graces of faith and obedience. Living long enough to see his grandsons Jacob and Esau on the verge of manhood, he at last died "in a good old age, an old man, and full of years." He was buried in the cave of Machpelah, beside Sarah, and there his sepulchre is to this day.

Abraham as a Friend and Neighbour.

The main interest of the story of Abraham's life centres in his intercourse with God. We shall consider this in our next lesson. Meanwhile there are some two or three incidents related of him which enable us to picture him to ourselves in his relation to

other men, and to form an idea of his character in its social aspect.

The first of these incidents occurred after Abraham's return from Egypt. His possessions and those of Lot had so increased during their sojourn there, that when they returned to Canaan "the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together." The consequence of this was that a strife arose "between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle." But Abram would not allow any ill-feeling to grow up between himself and his nephew. He would rather give way. "And Abram said to Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren." He proposed to Lot that he should choose that part of the country which he might prefer to dwell in, and as for himself that which Lot refused he would take. They were now on that hill near Bethel, where Abram had on his first visit built an altar to God, and which has been clearly identified of late years.¹ From this hill a beautiful view is obtained of the rich valley of the Jordan and the northern end of the Dead Sea. Lot is fascinated by the sight; he "beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt," and in an evil hour for himself he selfishly chose that soft country, where the luxurious and wicked Sodomites were then dwelling. Lot journeys accordingly eastward, leaving to Abram the hilly land of Canaan, less fruitful, but safer for body and soul. By his noble and self-denying conduct Abram puts an

¹ See a paper read at the Dublin Church Congress by Rev. George Williams.

end to the strife, and reads us all a lesson upon the blessedness of the peacemaker. And Lot, too, he reads us a lesson, but it is upon the baseness of selfishness. He gained nothing by his choice, and in the end became the hero of a sad and melancholy story.

Take another illustration. Abram had just returned from the pursuit of Chedorlaomer and his allies. They had conquered the Sodomites, and taken Lot captive. All Abram's feelings of kinship, so strong in an Eastern, had been roused by hearing of Lot's misfortune. Arming three hundred and eighteen servants, he had started in pursuit of the marauders, overtaken them, fought and defeated them. Lot was rescued and the spoil recovered. The incident shews what a powerful chieftain Abram was ; and yet his success might have elated him and made him proud. But no. Melchizedek, King of Salem and Priest of God the Most High, meets him with bread and wine, and Abram, ready to acknowledge that God has given him the victory, gives to God's priest a tithe of all the spoil. What a beautiful incident is this ! It brings out the humility of God's servant, and yet the respect with which others regard him. The figure of Melchizedek too stands forth, in its unknown descent and history, vividly on the face of the Bible narrative, as a type of Jesus Christ the Great High Priest, receiving the homage and adoration of His disciples.

We pass over many years, some thirty perhaps, and find Abraham standing up amidst an assembly of the people of the land, the Children of Heth, and bowing down himself before them. It is a sad occasion. Sarah, the companion of his long wanderings and the mother of Isaac, is dead. The stranger. Abraham the

Hebrew, her husband, has nowhere to bury her. Though he has wandered so long in the country not an inch of it can he call his own. The people meet him courteously, and are ready to grant his request. Not one of them but is willing to allow to Abraham the use of his sepulchre in which to bury his dead. But that is not what Abraham wants. He, to whom the land has been promised by God, will not mingle with the native population, so as to become one of them—not even in death. He must have a place of his own. But see how gently, yet firmly, he declines the well-intentioned kindness. He would like to purchase the cave of Machpelah, at its full worth, for a burying-place. He entreats the people to make interest for him with the owner. Ephron the Hittite will not be outdone in politeness. He will give the field—"in the presence of the sons of my people, give I it thee." He is ready nevertheless to take money for it, and Abraham knows it. Yet he makes it a favour for Ephron to allow him to purchase. Eventually the purchase is made, and there, in a tomb believed to be still preserved, and still to have in its keeping her dust, and that of her husband, Sarah is buried. The story rebukes in us all rudeness and discourtesy. Abraham becomes to us, nineteen centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ, the type of Christian gentleness and Christian firmness.

LESSON VI.

ABRAHAM—*continued.*

Read Gen. xv. to xix. 29.

Abraham as the Servant of God.

ABRAHAM stands out before us on the Bible page as the man of faith—the faithful man—the friend of God. To him, on eight or nine occasions, God revealed Himself, and step by step led him on to see in the promise of all nations being blessed in him an assurance that from him should spring the Promised Seed, longed for by Eve, hoped for by Lamech.

When God first spoke to Abram in Ur of the Chaldees, He said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee : and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing : and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee : and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." And Abram "went out, not knowing whither he went."¹ This was the first decisive step in Abram's life. He felt a call from God, he knew not whither it might lead him, but he did not hesitate to obey it. It was, as

¹ Heb. xi. 8.

St. Paul would say, "a door of faith" which God held open for him, and he went through it. In the lives of us all, perhaps in the time of our youth, God opens to us doors of faith. The whole future of our lives depends, it may be, upon our decision then. If by our own act we shut the door, we cannot tell whether God will ever open it again.

The promise which God at the first made to Abram was threefold : there was the promise of a country ; of a great posterity ; and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed.

After Abram arrived in the land of Canaan, the first part of the promise was renewed ;—"Unto thy seed will I give this land." Abram now knew that he had at last reached his journey's end. Yet through all his life he was never to possess any portion of it, except a cave at Machpelah as a burying-place. As years passed by the exercise of his faith must have been greater. To strengthen that faith, after Abram and Lot had separated, God, renewing the second part of the promise, said—"All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Yet Abram had no child. He was getting on in years, and could only look forward to his steward or chief slave being his heir ;—"Lo ! one," he says, "born in my house is mine heir." To encourage him, God comes to him again for the fourth time, and in vision, and bids him not be afraid. "I am thy shield," He says, "and thy exceeding great reward." Evidently, from Abram's reply, there was a shade of doubt coming over him ; the time seemed passing rapidly away, and as yet he had no seed. Could it be that "this Eliezer of Damascus" is the intended seed, that in him God's

promise is to be fulfilled? But the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, "This shall not be thine heir." Surely a son shall be born to him, and if he can number the stars of heaven, then too shall he be able to number his descendants. "And Abraham believed the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." God's promise is solemnly ratified. Between the double row of slain beasts and birds there passes at night-time a burning lamp; the sign that God had made a covenant with Abram.

Still the promise made at Ur is as yet only partially renewed; and though there is to be a seed, and Abram believes it, there is nothing as yet said about the mother of the seed. Abram, it is apparent, had no thought that his wife Sarai would be the mother. The birth of Ishmael shews us how Abram believed God, and yet was mistaken altogether as to the manner in which the covenant would be fulfilled. How gradually God trains His servants! Step by step He leads them on, drawing out their love and their faith.

"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene: one step enough for me."

The affections of his father were entwined around the lad Ishmael, as he grew up towards manhood. For thirteen years Abram lived on, regarding Ishmael as the promised seed, in whom God's covenant would be fulfilled. It was a terrible shock to him when told at last by God that he was mistaken. "Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee," is his prayer. It is the rudest trial his faith has yet undergone. That Sarah, his aged wife, should become a mother now seems to him impossible. When he hears it, he laughs, perhaps

with joy, but it would seem with incredulity. God reiterates what He has spoken, and declares that the name of the child of promise shall be Isaac (*i.e.* he laughs), in memory no doubt of this day. Then again Abraham's¹ faith rises once more. His unbelief is but momentary; the covenant of circumcision is established. Two parts of that first threefold promise are now renewed. The line of the Promised Seed is indicated. He must be the son of the free, not of the bond, woman.

Soon after this, Abraham was one day sitting at his tent door, in the heat of the day. Three travellers suddenly presented themselves to him, and when he saw them, he ran, with that Eastern politeness so conspicuously shewn in all he did, to meet them, and begged them to rest awhile, till he should have prepared some refreshment for them. Who were these strangers, and what their errand? Two of them were on their way, as we learn from the next chapter, to fulfil God's judgments upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain, and to rescue Lot and his family from the impending ruin. The third stranger is believed to have been our Blessed LORD Himself. In this interview we may venture to believe that He, Who afterwards appeared as the very Promised Seed Himself, appeared now unto Abraham, and renewed the assurance that Sarah should have a son. But the interview is remarkable on another account. For the first time for some five and twenty or thirty years at least, the last part of the threefold promise is mentioned again. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely

¹ His name is now changed. Gen. xvii.

become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" Thus the promise has once again grown to its first proportions. First the land, then the seed to inherit the land, then that the seed should be the free born son of promise, and now at last that in that seed all mankind should be blessed.

Abraham's faith is fast ripening to maturity. God knows of him that he will train his children and household to keep the ways of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment. Yes, *we* are his children, and he is still training us. For his high example still speaks to the youth or the maiden of these Christian days, when first setting foot on the pathway of labour and of active life. Be noble, be pure, be true, Abraham seems to say to them. As I looked forward, so do you look back, to the Promised Seed, and as I was a pilgrim in the land of Canaan, so remember that you too are pilgrims,—through all the trials and temptations awaiting you, ever looking for the City whose Builder and Maker is God.

Treating Abraham as His friend, God reveals to him His purpose of destroying the wicked Sodomites. Abraham appears to us as a mediator. He pleads for those wretched cities. If there are fifty, thirty, ten righteous there, will God indeed destroy the cities? And He said, I will not do it for ten's sake. But ten could not be found. Lot and his two daughters are rescued, while Sodom is destroyed.

Several years now pass by. The son of promise, in whom the father's love now centres, has grown to be a man, or at least a lad. Abraham is reposing upon God in fullest faith and confidence. There seems nothing

for him now but to calmly look forward to quickly passing days, lengthening years, and yet an eventide of life of special grace and beauty. But his faith has still to undergo the keenest trial. The son whom he so dearly loves, and who was so exclusively the heir of God's promises that He is called Abraham's only son, is to be offered up as a burnt-offering to God. The faith of the aged patriarch stands the trial. He is sure that *somehow* God will fulfil the promise that hung on Isaac, though he sees not how. Early in the morning, accompanied by Isaac and some attendants, he makes his way to the land of Moriah, to the place where afterwards stood Solomon's Temple.¹ The altar is built, the wood laid, the lad bound, the knife outstretched. But suddenly the father's hand is stayed by the voice of the Angel of the Lord. All God asked has been in reality done. For Abraham's will was to do God's will. "By faith," says the Apostle, "Abraham offered up Isaac, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." The promise was now renewed in all its fulness. "In blessing, I will bless thee";—"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice." Thus Abraham's life of faith and trust has been crowned with Jehovah's highest approval. In his life of willing obedience he is a type of our Blessed Lord. Abraham looked forward—saw Christ in the far off distance of time, and by the sacrifice of Isaac learned dimly how *even so* by suffering and sacrifice the redemption of the world was to be accomplished.

¹ There seems no sufficient reason for departing from the ancient tradition on this point.

LESSON VII.

ISAAC.

Read Gen. xxi. 1-21, xxiv., xxv. 19-34, xxvi., xxvii., xxxv. 27-29.

THE life of Isaac presents a great contrast to that of Abraham. While this latter was full of incident, frequent travel, and broken by eight or nine communications from God, Isaac's life was passed chiefly in one spot, from which he never seems to have wandered more than two or three days' journey. The want of incident coincides well with his calm placid character, which led him to run away from difficulties rather than to face them. Instead moreover of eight or nine, only two communications of God are recorded as having been made to Isaac.

Isaac was born in the Negeb or South Country,¹ which, with a width of some fifty or sixty miles, borders the southern portion of the Holy Land, stretching from the Dead Sea and the Valley of Arabah on the east to the Mediterranean on the west. Though now left nearly uncultivated, it is full of the remains of ancient cultivation. Terraced hill-sides, remains of gardens, orchards and vineyards, wells, some still full of water, others blocked up with rubbish, and ruins of towns and fortresses, all tell of a long past time when this land

¹ Gen. xx. 1.

might have been described as one flowing with milk and honey, full of oil-olives and vineyards. In this pleasant country, near to the southern extremity, and close to Beer-lahai-roi, Abraham and Sarah were when their only son was born, the son of promise, in whom Abraham saw the ancestor of the Promised Seed.

Great was the rejoicing when Isaac was weaned. But there was one terrible alloy to Abraham's pleasure. The old jealousy between Sarah and Hagar was aroused by Ishmael's conduct. Sarah saw him mocking at the rejoicings, and at once required Abraham to "cast out this bondwoman and her son : for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Hard as was Sarah's request, and contrary to all the fatherly feelings of Abraham's heart, the thing came "of the Lord." So Hagar and her son are cast out, to wander where they may.

Meanwhile the intention of God is fulfilled. Isaac, as the promised son, is kept separate. There must be no question in after years as to Abraham's successor. In Isaac shall his seed be called. St. Paul brings out the spiritual meaning of this history in his Epistle to the Galatians. Ishmael represented the Law, Isaac the Gospel ; the two cannot exist together : the older, which represented the keeping men in bondage, must give way to the younger, the representative of the freer air and the more noble and pure life of the Gospel.

We hear nothing more of Isaac for several years. In the interval his father appears to have moved a little farther north to Beersheba, and he is there when the call came to him to offer up Isaac, his only son, a burnt-offering unto the Lord. Ignorant of his father's intention, Isaac accompanies him, and it is not till they

have arrived at the appointed mountain that he becomes aware that he is the lamb to be offered. The type of One Who coming after him should be greater than he, Isaac submitted himself to the will of his father, and of God. Silently he lays himself on the altar, and allows his father to bind him. No such act of self-surrender is recorded until that of Him Who gave His life a ransom for many. If by his high act of faith Abraham was able to rejoice in the sight of Christ's day, surely Isaac too did not go unrewarded. He also must have learned some high truths about God, and of his own typical character, the thought of which sustained and supported him through his long life, especially that last dreary half-century nearly,—when, blind, feeble, and latterly a widower, he spent a lonely and apparently uncomforted old age.

Some fifteen years or so elapse, and we have another circumstance in Isaac's life recorded. In perhaps the most charming and beautiful picture of ancient Oriental life and manners of which we have any record, we are told of Abraham's extreme care and anxiety to provide his son a wife from amongst his own people. The son of promise, and the heir of the promises, must not intermarry with the daughter of any of the heathens around. In the most solemn manner Abraham charges his trusty servant, Eliezer of Damascus probably, to go to Haran, to his brother's family, and fetch a wife hence for Isaac his son. The Lord would be certain to direct him and make his journey prosperous. In no case, and under no circumstances, must he take Isaac himself to Haran. The servant, taking with him ten of his master's camels, and gifts of jewels for the future bride of Isaac, makes his way to Haran, the

city of Nahor. His first act was to pray to his master's God, and to ask that he may know the damsel by a sign. She is not to be forward in offering water for himself and his camels—nor is she simply to comply with his request. Modestly, yet courteously, and with a true Eastern hospitality, she is to offer more than he asks. If such an one he should meet, she must be the appointed wife of Isaac. It was evening-tide. The maidens are coming out of the city to draw water. Amongst them comes one, fairer than the rest it may be, to whom the servant proffers his request for water. She fulfils the sign. She draws water for the camels as well as for the man. He presents her with jewels—bracelets for her hands, and a jewel for the nose or forehead, and inquires her name. Upon hearing that she is one of Abraham's family, he thanks God for having so prospered his journey. Rebekah runs to her mother's house and tells the great news. Laban, her brother, whose cupidity is excited by the sight of the jewels, welcomes the traveller. Refusing all offers of refreshment, the servant at once tells his errand; Laban and his father acknowledge the matter to be of the Lord; Rebekah consents to go to be Isaac's wife; and on the morrow the homeward journey is at once commenced. In the whole transaction which shall we most admire—the faith of Abraham in God, or the faithfulness and single-eyed service of his servant?

One evening Isaac, still sorrowing for his mother, who has now been dead some three years, is praying in the fields at eventide. He has come from Beer-lahai-roi, his favourite dwelling-place. Presently he lifts his eyes, and sees camels coming, which he evidently recognizes as those of his father. Rebekah

in her turn has lighted down from her camel, and on learning who the man is who is coming to meet them, has assumed the long veil of Eastern women. The two meet. They learn to love one another as husband and wife. Rebekah is taken by Isaac into Sarah's tent, and he is comforted after his mother's death.

Another interval of twenty years brings us to the birth of Esau and Jacob. Even before their birth, the Lord told Rebekah that the elder should serve the younger. The line of the Promised Seed was to be kept clear and distinct. The open, careless and good-natured Esau might be more of a favourite amongst men than the cunning and worldly-wise Jacob, but God saw in the latter a capacity for faith which was not in his elder brother. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

After a while there came a famine such as had been some eighty or one hundred years before in his father's time. Intending to take refuge in Egypt, Isaac broke up his camp at Beer-lahai-roi, and entered the territory of Abimelech,¹ king of Gerar. Here, for the first time since the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, Isaac heard the voice of God. He is not to go down into Egypt. Perhaps if he had gone down his gentle and quiet nature would have led him to adopt the settled life of that country, and induced him to stay. For this the time had not yet come. So he sojourned in Abimelech's country.

Here, in the incident of the wells, Isaac's gentleness was again conspicuous. Driven from one place, he

¹ Probably the son or grandson of the Abimelech in Abraham's time. Abimelech seems to have been a title of these Philistine sovereigns, just as Pharaoh was among the Egyptians.

withdrew to another, and again to a third. At last he was left unmolested, and he called the new spot Rehoboth, or "spaces."

Isaac after this went up to Beersheba, and there, for the second time, the LORD appeared to him, and encouraged him. He built an altar and worshipped the LORD. The ill-will of Abimelech and his servants still followed him. They were in truth afraid of him, and desired a covenant of peace with him, which after some remonstrance he granted. The very same day, his servants, digging a well, perhaps the very one which Abraham had dug, and which had become filled up, found water, and so for the second time the place received the name of Beersheba, the "Well of the Oath."

Only one more incident is recorded of Isaac's life. Though he had still nearly half a century to live, being now about one hundred and thirty-seven¹ years old, "his eyes were dim, that he could not see." He called his eldest son Esau, the man fond of the hunter's life, and desired him to obtain for him some savoury meat, the product of the hunting-field. Now, some time before this, Esau had grieved his father and mother by marrying two Canaanitish women. Still Esau was the favourite son of his father. The gentle nature of Isaac leaned with confidence on the stronger nature of his son. Isaac thought that his death was fast approaching. He must bless his son before he died, that is, he must give him the special blessing of the first-born. Did Isaac think to bestow this unknown to Rebekah, who, mindful of that prophecy before the birth of her sons, would

¹ Or, as some think, and as really seems more probable, 117 years old. This would make Jacob's sojourn in Padan-aram forty years instead of twenty. See *The Speaker's Commentary*.

have desired the blessing for Jacob, her favourite son? We cannot tell. Or had he a consciousness that in proposing to give to Esau the blessing appertaining to his birthright he was fighting against the will of God? We cannot tell. But certain it is, that when Jacob had obtained the blessing, and Esau's return revealed to his father the true position of affairs, Isaac trembled exceedingly. He saw God's Hand in it. He could no longer resist the Divine ordering. He was obliged to admit to Esau that he had blessed Jacob with the blessing intended for him—"yea," he added, "he shall be blessed."

Afraid of the effects of Esau's wrath, Rebekah, with that bold spirit of intrigue which seems to have been so strong in her, contrived to accomplish her purpose of sending Jacob away by rousing Isaac's fears lest his younger son should marry a Canaanitish woman, even as Esau had done. His father, who now fully recognized Jacob as the inheritor of the promises, dismissed him with his best blessing:—"God Almighty bless thee, . . . that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger."

The history of Isaac's life now closes. Except that he lived to see Jacob's return from Padan-aram, we know no more of him. His two sons met to lay him in the tomb beside Abraham and Sarah.

The chief glory and beauty of Isaac's character is its gentleness. He never quarrels. Strife is hateful to him. There is not about him the grandeur of Abraham nor the cleverness of Jacob. But in his submissiveness, in his love and veneration for his father, and his readiness to suffer wrong, he is not an unworthy type of the great Promised Seed, "Who, when

He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."¹ In Isaac the idea of sacrifice advanced a clear step forward. The Promised Seed must be a Sacrifice; and as Isaac willingly submitted to be bound, so must the Seed willingly offer Himself as a Sacrifice for the whole world.

Moreover, as Abraham saw God exercise the principle of selection in choosing the son of the free woman before the son of the bond woman, so Isaac saw that principle extended. Of two sons equally free born, God chose the younger, and made him the heir of the promises. This was necessary in order to preserve the line of the Seed. But its earlier consequences did not at once become evident. There was nothing in Abraham's circumstances to lead him to narrow the circle of the blessing wherewith God had blessed him. Nor yet in Isaac's. Somewhat there may have been in Jacob's. But as the necessity arose more and more to isolate the chosen family or nation, there grew up, insensibly perhaps, the feeling of exclusion. Hence, side by side with the great thought of a Redeemer of the world, the benefits of Whose Sacrifice and Intercession should be reaped by all mankind, there arose up the other thought of a chosen people, separated from other nations, and enjoying, to the exclusion of all others, the blessing of God's favour and countenance. This feeling grew in intensity, until Jesus Christ came, Who broke down the middle wall of partition, and, fulfilling the prophetic promise made to Abraham, proclaimed to all, bond or free, Jew or Gentile, the glad tidings of God's love and mercy.

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

LESSON VIII.

JACOB.

Read Gen. xxviii., xxix., xxxi. to xxxiii., xxxv. 1-20.

JACOB'S life very naturally divides itself into three periods: (1) the period spent at home with his father and mother; (2) that spent at Haran with his uncle Laban; (3) the remainder passed in the Promised Land, and in Egypt.

(1.) *The First Period.*

The key to Jacob's conduct during his home life, and indeed during the whole of his career, is to be found in the revelation made to his mother before the birth of himself and his brother:—"The elder shall serve the younger." Rebekah certainly pondered long and often upon those words, and watched anxiously the growing dispositions of her two sons. Her affections centred on the quiet Jacob, while Isaac, drawn towards one who was strong where he himself was weak, loved Esau, the brave and adventurous hunter. Upon Isaac's mind the prophecy of God made a much less deep impression we may well believe than upon Rebekah's. She felt that Jacob was the heir of the Promise, and communicated her feeling to him. It was not clear how the prophecy was to be fulfilled, but both Rebekah and Jacob believed

in it. They were ready to seize any opening which might seem to accelerate its fulfilment. Hence that eager reply of Jacob to Esau, when, faint and weary from the hunt, he asked his brother for some of that red lentil which Jacob was sodding into pottage;—"Sell me this day thy birthright." Hence too the anxiety of Rebekah to secure at what she supposed to be the hands of the dying Isaac the blessing of the first-born for Jacob. We dislike instinctively the shrewd bargaining of Jacob, and we loathe the lie and the deceit which he and his mother practised upon the aged and blind Isaac; yet we seem to see at the same time, in what they did, the failings and the sins, not of absolutely wicked persons, but rather of those who, believing in God, are unwilling to wait His time for the fulfilment of His promises.

On the other hand, in Esau is seen the careless, indifferent man, who does not value religious privileges and blessings when they are apparently of no use to him, but when the need for them is felt only too eagerly clutches at them. Esau despised his birthright for a mess of pottage; but when he was expecting to receive the first-born's blessing from his father, then the value of the birthright was seen. Reaping in real truth that which he had sown, he was angry because of his failure, and threatened, in his passionate unrepentant way, "to slay his brother Jacob." Yet we feel a pang of sorrow for him as we hear him, with a great and exceeding bitter cry, say, "Bless me, even me also, O my father."

Nor must we forget that though Jacob obtained the birthright and the blessing, he learned by bitter experience in his after life that the lie which he acted and

spoke brought its own punishment. Those years of deceit which he endured at the hands of Laban, and those other years of sorrow for the cruelty, lawlessness, and disobedience of his own sons, must have brought home to him his sin. Not thus, nor by such bypaths, were God's high purposes to be fulfilled.

(2.) *Jacob at Haran.*

According to the usually received chronology, Jacob appears to have been seventy-seven years of age when he obtained the first-born's blessing, but if, as seems not unlikely, his sojourn in Haran extended over forty, and not as is commonly supposed over twenty years only, he was only fifty-seven. His going to Haran followed closely upon the deceit practised upon Isaac. Though sent there ostensibly by his father to seek a wife amongst his own kindred, his journey was really a flight from the anger of Esau.

Very lonely and very sorrowful must Jacob have felt as the sun set upon the first night of his journey. His father, it is true, had bestowed upon him the richest blessing, and the now confirmed belief that he was the one chosen by God to be Abraham's representative, must have given him confidence. Yet the way was all untried before him. The consciousness of sin must surely too have oppressed him. That night perhaps was the crisis of his life. In the middle of it, as he slept upon his pillow of stones, the mountains around him with their terraced sides became in his dream a staircase[†] reaching from earth to heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending this wondrous

[†] A better rendering than "ladder," as in our Authorized Version.

staircase ; and at its top stood One Who announced Himself to Jacob as the God of Abraham, and of Isaac. He blessed Jacob with the blessing given before to his father and his grandfather, and added—"Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." Jacob awoke from his sleep. "How dreadful," he exclaimed, "is this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven." A stone set up as a pillar, and oil poured upon the stone, marked Jacob's sense of the spot being holy ground. He called the place Bethel,¹ or the House of God. He vowed to worship JEHOVAH, and to pay to Him a tenth of all his possessions.

Yet Jacob was far from being perfected. Even in this high moment of promise and blessing, he seems almost, as it were, to make a bargain with God ;—"If I come here again in peace, then shall the LORD be my God."

Nevertheless Jacob's ideas, whatever they may have been, about the birthright blessing for which he had striven so sinfully, must have been lifted up from earth to heaven. To have the blessing of the first-born meant to be the chosen and favoured one of God ; it meant not temporal blessings only, but that higher spiritual blessing of being the ancestor of the true Seed, in Whom all nations should be blessed. That Seed should be the true Staircase upon which man might ascend to God, the true way from earth to Heaven. The dream at Bethel could never have been effaced from his memory, though other thoughts, cares and affections may oftentimes have made it dim and misty in the ever-lengthening time.

¹ A name transferred afterwards to the neighbouring city of Luz.

At Haran Jacob prospered. He had indeed a crafty and avaricious man with whom to deal, in his uncle Laban; but his very necessities brought out all Jacob's powers of thought and observation, and he made use of them in his dealings with Laban. The increase of Jacob's wealth excited the jealousy of his cousins, Laban's sons, so that at last his servitude became intolerable. Having secured the co-operation of his wives, Leah and Rachel, he determined upon a secret flight. Crossing the Euphrates, he set his face toward Mount Gilead, and travelling with all the speed possible,—accompanied as he was by young children, and numerous flocks and herds,—he reached Gilead, the land immediately east of Jordan. Here he was overtaken by Laban, who, being warned of God, was afraid to injure his nephew. But an angry altercation ensued about some images or teraphim which Laban said had been stolen from him. Jacob was indignant, Laban mean. Restrained however by varying motives, they agreed to a covenant. The spot where they stood receives its double name of Galeed and Jegar-sahadutha,¹ "the heap of witness," in memory of the event, and as a token that they would neither of them pass that boundary to the injury of the other.

Thus the second period of Jacob's life closed. He and Laban never met again. During this time Jacob is seen as a man of deep but quiet feelings; willing to be open and honest, but ready to exercise his natural cunning and foresight should occasion require them. Amidst great difficulties, he pursues his way

¹ "Galeed" being Hebrew, "Jegar-sahadutha" Aramaic, both meaning the same. These two names are a proof of how soon language becomes diversified when communication ceases.

steadily, keeping the end in view. From a solitary wanderer he has become a great chieftain, with his wives, and his children, his men-servants and maid-servants ; his camels, and asses and cattle. Little or nothing is said as to his progress in faith. Yet surely so thoughtful and earnest a man must have made some advance in that long course of years. That it was so is evident, because at last the time came when God saw that the discipline through which he had gone had prepared him for a recall to the Promised Land.

(3.) Jacob in Canaan and Egypt.

Laban gone, Jacob pursued his way, and pitched his tents not far from Jordan, close to the fords of Jabbok. Here God granted to him "a vision of angels." The hosts of God were encamped on either side of him. Whatever might happen, he might rest assured that they who were on his side were more than they who were against him. He needed all the support and strength such a vision could give him. Once more he was in the power of Esau his brother. His brother's anger, his own sin,—all the past must have risen vividly before him when he heard that Esau was coming with 400 men. He took all possible precautions, and then threw himself upon God's protection. Very humble, very conscience-stricken were his words ;—"O God of my father Abraham, and of my father Isaac, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant." He determined to "lodge that night in the company." But no, he must be alone. In the dead of

the night he rose up, and sent his wives and sons across the river. "Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day." It is the second crisis of Jacob's life. What does it mean? He has been in banishment some twenty or forty years—years perhaps of secret repentance. He is about to meet Esau again. His old sin is brought to remembrance. Will he quail before his brother? Will he resort again to miserable deceits and base subterfuges? He is about to tread again the soil of the Promised Land. Will he tread it nobly as God's servant, or ignobly as the servant of sin? It is a time of intense spiritual conflict. God wrestles as a man with His servant. And though made to feel his weakness, for by a touch of the mysterious Hand Jacob's thigh is put out of joint, yet Jacob prevails—he will not let the Man go except He will bless him. And what is the blessing? It is this. His name is changed. It *was* "Jacob" the supplanter, the hard bargainer with his brother, the deceiver of his father; it shall now be "Israel," a prince of God. "By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto Him."^x

The interview of the brothers was affectionate. And then they parted, to meet apparently only once more, at the grave of their father Isaac. Esau retired to Seir or Edom, leaving Jacob free to enter the Promised Land.

Jacob spent some thirty-three years in the land of Canaan. They were years probably for the most part of trial. Ten or twelve of them were spent near the city of

^x Hosea xii. 3, 4.

Shechem,¹ where he purchased land, built an altar to El-Elohe-Israel,² and sowing corn, began to assume the habits of a settled life. A rude and terrible incident forced him to travel southward, under God's protection, to Bethel, where God had answered him in the day of his distress. At Bethel, Deborah, his mother's nurse, who had come perhaps on an errand from his father, died. There is something very tender and touching in this mention of an old servant. The name of Israel was confirmed at Bethel, and then he moved again southward. Another deep sorrow awaited him. His beloved Rachel died at Bethlehem. But her little child lived. His father will not despond. Sorrow shall not quench his faith, nay, it shall add to it. The child shall not be Benoni, but Benjamin—not the son of sorrow, but the son of the right hand, of strength, that is, and power. Travelling on, Jacob came to Mamre, in time once more to see his aged father Isaac before he died.

And now Jacob himself was becoming an old man. Sorrow and trial were still to go with him. His sons were fierce and cruel. They inherited moreover some of their father's deceit. His dear son Joseph, as he approached manhood, was taken from him; there seemed scarcely anything left for him but to lie down and die. Thus did the penalty of his early sins cleave to him almost to the end. But there was a brighter side. Israel learned deep lessons in spiritual life. He "observed" all these dispensations of God. At last the cloud of sorrow was lifted. Joseph was restored to

¹ Our English Version says Jacob travelled "to Shalem." It would seem better to translate Shalem "in peace," and so bring Jacob to the place where Shechem was then living.

² That is, "God, the God of Israel."

him. God encouraged him. He went down to Egypt full of faith and hope. There, after seventeen years, he died. His last days were bright and peaceful. His years may have been "few and evil," but yet "his blessings had prevailed above the blessings of his progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." Gathering his sons around him, he gave to each his last blessing. In words, coming from a heart full of loving, even if sorrowful, memories of the past, he charged them to bury him beside Abraham and Isaac, Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah. He looked forward into the far distant future, and saw, even as Abraham had done, the day of Christ. Thus chastened and purified by sorrow and suffering, Israel died, a shock of corn fully ripe.

LESSON IX.

JOSEPH AND THE GOING DOWN INTO EGYPT.

Read Gen. xxxvii., xxxix. to l.

UNTIL the time of Joseph the history of the family from whom was to spring the Seed promised to Eve is the story of the life of some one man, who was a direct ancestor of Jesus Christ according to the flesh ; —of such men as Noah or Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. But the history becomes with Joseph that of a family, and soon of a nation. The leading character of the time or history is no longer an ancestor necessarily of the Promised Seed, but simply a member of the family or nation. Such is Joseph, and such in after days were Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Saul.

Joseph, the eldest, and for some years the only son of Rachel, was born at Haran, about six years before his father's return to the land of Canaan, and when Jacob was about ninety-one years old. In after years he would just remember perhaps his father's flight from Laban, and Jacob's care to place himself and his mother last in the cavalcade as they stood waiting the dreaded approach of Esau.

As Joseph grew up, his father's love was centred upon him, as the son of his old age. Jacob made him a striped coat or garment of bright colours, possibly

as indicating a wish to give him as the eldest son of Rachel the birthright of the family.

Joseph is now seventeen ; a bright handsome youth, full of promise of future excellence. Already there is a marked difference between himself and his half-brethren. He is with them, but he mingles not in their rude and evil ways. For Jacob's elder sons were apparently very different from their father or grandfather. Cruel and licentious, they seem to have made themselves hated by the Canaanites. Joseph brought their evil report to his father, whose marked preference for him aroused the jealousy of his brethren. "They hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." Upon the first opportunity which presented itself, they, heedless of his soul's anguish, sold him to a company of Midianite merchantmen on their way to Egypt, with the "spicery and balm and myrrh" so much in request amongst the Egyptians for the embalming of the dead. By these men Joseph was carried into Egypt, to the busy and populous city of On, the centre of the worship of the sun-god Ra, and was sold to Potiphar, captain of the executioners, or, as we should say, superintendent or inspector of prisons. Here Joseph quickly won the confidence of his master, so that "he made him overseer of his house," and Joseph became "a prosperous man." The secret of his success was an habitual sense of God's presence. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" he asks, when tempted to sin. The victim of a false accusation, Joseph was cast into prison, though it would seem that Potiphar did not altogether believe him to be guilty.¹ Very soon Joseph became the trusted deputy of the keeper of

¹ Compare Gen. xl. 4.

the prison, but more than two years elapsed before he was released. Deliverance came at last. The king dreamt two dreams, which no one could interpret. At last his chief butler remembered how Joseph interpreted a dream of his so successfully two years before. The young man was at once sent for; and a solution asked from him of Pharaoh's dreams. He gave it, but assured the king that the real interpreter was God. The dreams meant the same thing :—Seven years of extraordinary plenty, and seven of very grievous famine. As now, so then, Egypt depended for its fertility upon the overflowing of the Nile, and this again is contingent upon the amount of rainfall in the mountainous regions of Abyssinia and Central Africa. If there should be a drought in those upper countries, there would be famine in Egypt. So it was in Joseph's time.

Joseph suggested to Pharaoh that preparation should be made for those terrible famine years. Pharaoh, struck by his wisdom, and grateful to him, appointed Joseph, with the applause of all his officers, commissioner to carry out the plans he had suggested. By a sudden leap Joseph was raised from a prison dungeon to being lord over all the land of Egypt.¹ But his elevation did not spoil him. He was still God's servant, carrying about with him the conviction that it was not for Egypt's sake alone that he was thus placed in a position of so much power.

The seven years of plenty passed by. The store-houses of every city were full of corn. Joseph had personally inspected all the preparations, and now the seven years of dearth began to come. The people, who had made little or no provision for the famine,

¹ Compare Psa. cv. 20-22.

cried to Pharaoh for bread. "Go to Joseph," he said; "what he saith to you do."

Joseph's great powers of statesmanship now displayed themselves. The Pharaoh who was reigning was one of the Shepherd kings,¹ not a native prince, and very probably the people were disaffected towards him, and would have gladly thrown off their allegiance. But Joseph seized, with very remarkable power, the opportunity to consolidate the rule of his benefactor. At first the Egyptians had plenty of money, which was in the form of heavy golden and silver rings, with which to buy the corn. After a time the money became exhausted, and then Joseph introduced barter; the cattle were exchanged for bread. This arrangement lasted for a year, and then the people had nothing but their bodies and their land to sell for bread. Joseph bought them for Pharaoh, and to facilitate the distribution of corn gathered the scattered population closer around the store cities. Both land and people, except the priests and their lands, were now the property of the king. But Joseph, with the forethought of a great statesman, saw that this was too hard a condition to last. He voluntarily relaxed the bargain. Instead of being serfs, the people were to hold their land of the crown as its tenants, paying a fifth part of the produce to Pharaoh by way of rent or land-tax. The allegiance of the people was thus secured. "Thou hast saved our lives," they said, "let us find grace in the eyes of my Lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."

Joseph's administration did not confine itself simply to the internal affairs of the nation. The merchants

¹ The shorter period (215 years) assigned in this Manual to the sojourn in Egypt would bring Joseph's Pharaoh within the *Shepherd* dynasty.

of Canaan and other neighbouring countries, where the famine was felt as sorely as in Egypt, came to Egypt to buy corn. Joseph, appreciating the very great importance of maintaining the trade of the country, willingly supplied them with bread stuffs in exchange for money and goods. By this means the life and energy of the Egyptian people and their influence in foreign affairs were sustained. It is believed also that the system of irrigation by means of small canals ramifying all over the country, and fed by the Nile, was introduced under Joseph's administration.

In every way therefore Joseph shewed himself a wise and prudent state-minister. The beneficence of his rule was long remembered. For nearly 150 years it maintained its hold upon the mind of the Egyptian people. But it served a higher purpose still. It was the means used by God to work out His great purposes in regard to the Promised Seed. It was easy for a Shepherd king to advance one in his kingdom who had been a shepherd lad, and had sprung from a shepherd race. The keeping open the communications with other countries made it possible for Joseph's brethren to come as traders and buyers of corn into Egypt; and the sympathies of a king of alien race, who felt that he could not trust too implicitly to the good faith of the native population, would be the more readily given to a race of like occupation with his own ancestors. Joseph seems well to have understood this, and to have traced in it all the hand of God.

Among the foreign traders whose purchases of corn Joseph himself superintended, there came one day, in the first year of the famine, ten men from the land of Canaan. Though, disguised as he was by his growth

from seventeen to thirty-seven, and by his Egyptian dress and manners, these men did not recognize Joseph, he at once knew them to be his own brethren. During all those twenty years his thoughts had been with his old home, and his father, and his brother Benjamin. Would he ever see them again? Did his father know the truth about him? Was Benjamin also an object of hatred as he himself had been?

Why had he made no effort, we might ask, to see his father, during the seven years that he had been governor over Egypt? The distance was not so great but that he might easily have made a journey into Canaan. Surely the reason was that he felt he was in the hands of God, and had learned from his father, as the lesson of his life-long experience, to wait God's time. Now at last that time seemed to have come.

His brethren stood before him. And yet some Divine impulse stayed him from making himself known unto them. They must be proved, whether they were repentant, and trustworthy intelligence must be gained of his father and Benjamin. Now for the first time he learnt that his father had regarded him from the first as dead. His questions, without exciting their suspicions, awakened their consciences. They connected their present distress with their grievous sin;—"We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Retaining Simeon as a hostage, Joseph allowed them to depart, upon the strict condition that the next time they came Benjamin was to be with them.

The year went round. Food again was wanted, and with great difficulty Judah persuaded his father to let Benjamin go. We know how it all ended; how Joseph tried his brethren yet once and again; how Judah made

a noble speech, betokening surely a repentant heart; and how at last Joseph, unable to refrain any longer, exclaimed: "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" He bade his brethren see God's directing hand in all that had happened, even in their own cruel conduct towards himself.

Nothing now remained but to bring Israel his father into Egypt. Pharaoh, pleased at the thought, afforded every facility, and placed Goshen, the best and most fertile part of Egypt, at Joseph's disposal, for his father, and brethren, with their wives and children, their numerous attendants, and their great flocks and herds. On the way a solemn halt was made at Beersheba, while Israel offered sacrifice, for the last time, unto his father's God, in the land where his father had dwelt. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and he said—"I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again."

Thus the chosen family came into the land which was in after years to be unto them a house of bondage and a home of severe affliction. But for the present all was bright and joyous. Joseph went up in his chariot to meet Israel his father, and Israel, in words which were strangely like the words of another when he greeted the Child Jesus,¹ said, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." The sorrow of many years is over, and he whom "the Word of the Lord has tried"² knows now, and his brethren know too, the meaning of those early dreams, and those years of captivity, of banishment and imprisonment.

¹ Luke ii. 29, 30.

² Psa. cv. 19.

And as, seventeen years afterwards, the sons of Jacob gathered round his bed, and listened to his last words of blessing, Joseph felt how still his father's heart loved him, as he heard of the blessings which shall rest on "the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brethren." His own faith too it may be was strengthened as his father spoke of the God who had fed him all his life long—of the Angel which had redeemed him—of the land of their fathers to which God would certainly bring them again.

With scarcely a failure, scarcely a word or deed recorded of him which can be called into question, Joseph stands out on the sacred page as the example of a pure and upright and God-fearing man. Fitted evidently by nature to have power and to rule, he exercised the power, when he had it, righteously and justly. In all his relations he never forgot that he was God's servant, sent into the world to work out God's purposes, even though it were at the cost of suffering to himself.

LESSON X.

MOSES AND THE EXODUS.

Read Exod. i. to vi. 13, vii. to xix.

OF the 430 years which were to elapse between Abraham's first visit to Egypt and the going out therefrom of the children of Israel, about half had expired when Jacob removed from Canaan with all his family and possessions, and settled in Goshen, the fruitful north-east corner of the land of Egypt. Reckoning all the slaves and dependants who must have come with Jacob, there cannot have been less than 1000 souls, all of whom would be counted as Hebrews. These "grew and multiplied exceedingly," so that, doubling themselves in every twenty years, they numbered at least 2,000,000 at the time of the Exodus. Such a total population is implied by the 600,000 fighting men of Numbers i. 46.

As long as the same family or dynasty ruled in Egypt the Hebrews were protected, and prospered exceedingly. But about 135 years after Jacob's entry, a new king arose which knew not Joseph. The Shepherd kings were in fact deposed, and a native Egyptian dynasty ruled instead. The new king, sharing the prejudices of his fellow-countrymen against a shepherd race, and jealous of the increasing power and numbers

of the Israelites,¹ determined to oppress them, and if possible check their increase.

The king thus unconsciously worked out the designs of God. Some rumour of God's prophecy to Abraham seems to have reached him, for he was evidently afraid lest they "should get them up out of the land." The country could not afford the loss of so numerous and hard-working a body of people, but at the same time he thought they must not be allowed to become too powerful. Probably, if left to themselves, the people would never have been induced to leave the comforts of Egypt. But they soon sighed by reason of the bondage, and longed for deliverance. Pharaoh's plans thus had exactly the contrary effect to that which he desired. His last order too, for the destruction of all the boy-children, worked for the furtherance of the Divine purposes. To it the Israelites owed it, that when the time came, God had a man ready, who by his education, talents and high position was fitted to be the instrument of the nation's deliverance.

This man was Moses, the son of a Levite named Amram, and Jochebed his wife. Born just after the issue of the fatal decree for the destruction of the infant sons, and being "exceeding fair," his mother, in the hope of preserving his life, set him afloat when three months old in the river Nile, in a little vessel of bulrushes, smeared with pitch to make it water-tight. Pharaoh's daughter rescued the little child, and engaged as nurse, without knowing it, his own mother. Thus two points necessary to his future life were pro-

¹ As the Psalmist says, "He made them stronger than their enemies," Psa. cv. 24.

vided for. As the adopted son of the princess, he was brought up in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians; and as the nursling of his own mother, he probably learned from her of the history of his people, and of its hopes of deliverance.

Moses seems to have been kept from all direct intercourse with his people, so that it was not till "he was full forty years old that it came into his heart to visit his brethren."¹ He had probably no particular object in his visit, but when he beheld their bondage and misery, he seems to have felt at once that God had called him to deliver them.² With a high consciousness of the destiny of his people, and rejecting the grand career of an Egyptian statesman which was before him, he chose, as the Apostle says, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."³ But his brethren did not as yet recognize him as their deliverer, and so, when he tried to relieve them from evil treatment, and to appease a quarrel, they resented his interference.⁴

Moses saw no safety but in flight. For the next forty years he was a stranger in the land of the Midianites, an Abrahamic people,⁵ dwelling around the shores of the eastern, or Elanitic, gulf of the Red Sea.

Those forty years were to Moses a time of seclusion and separation, of preparation for his great work. At last they were at an end; and then there reached him the loud and distinct call out of the burning bush—"Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that

¹ Acts vii. 23.

² Acts vii. 25.

³ Heb. xi. 25, 26.

⁴ Acts vii. 24, 26-28.

⁵ Gen. xxv. 2.

thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt."¹

Doubts and difficulties crowd up before Moses, his insignificance, his want of eloquence, the very ignorance of himself and his people. But God overrules all these:—"Certainly I will be with thee, Aaron shall be thy spokesman. Say unto the people, I AM hath sent me unto you." And for credentials, to induce the people to believe in his mission, there is that rod in his hand, which shall become a serpent or a rod at his pleasure; there is his own hand, which shall be leprous or clean as he chooses; there is the river Nile, which shall be blood or water according as he shall order it.

Thus encouraged, Moses left the desert and the sheep of Jethro, and having been joined by Aaron, set forth on his great mission. The people received him gladly—they rejoiced in the thought of deliverance, and believed in the Lord.

Not so Pharaoh. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

The immediate result was an increase in the oppression and cruelty practised on the people—they were perplexed,² Moses discouraged—"Thou hast not delivered Thy people at all;"—some of his old difficulties started up afresh.³

God encouraged him again, and reminded him that He had made known to him the meaning of the sacred name "JEHOVAH," the purport of which was not known to their forefathers.

Yet obviously more must be done to convince Pharaoh. Three months had probably elapsed since

¹ Exod. iii. 10.

² Exod. v. 21.

³ Exod. vi. 12.

the first call, and now for the next nine, it may be, there followed in rapid succession signs and wonders, and nine terrible plagues. Moses gained each day in strength and confidence, and became very great in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh, softening for a moment when the plagues were upon him, hardened his heart more than ever, as each was removed. At last the order was given, "Let every man demand of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold."¹ They were no longer to be slaves—they were going out with a high hand. But still Pharaoh retained his grasp. One last plague, more grievous than any, must be inflicted;—the first-born must be slain. To mark that night for ever, the beginning of the year was changed, and the feast of the Passover was instituted. The flesh of the slain lamb was to be eaten in haste, each man of Israel ready prepared for the journey, and the blood of the lamb was to be sprinkled on their lintels and door-posts, that the destroying angel might pass over their houses. "It is a night much to be observed," for it not only perpetuated the remembrance of Israel's deliverance, but it prefigured the great Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, by Whose death there is deliverance from the bondage of sin. "Christ our passover," says St. Paul, "is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast."²

The preparations for safety and for flight were made, and then at midnight there arose a great cry and wail of sorrow. The first-born were dying; the invisible hand of God's angel was slaying them. Pharaoh and

¹ It is better to translate the word thus, than by the "borrow" of our Authorized Version, which conveys a wrong idea.

² 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

his servants were at last conquered. "Go," said the king, "serve the LORD as ye have said." "And the Egyptians were urgent upon them, for they said, We be all dead men." With kneading-trough on shoulder and dough unleavened, the vast host, with a mixed multitude of other and probably kindred nations, went up out of Egypt, journeying from Rameses, the capital city of Goshen, to Succoth. From Succoth, the straight road to the Promised Land lay in a northeasterly direction, not far from the Mediterranean Sea, and through the Philistine territory. In a very few days they could, by this route, have been in Palestine. But they could not be trusted. Enfeebled by slavery, they would have turned back to Egypt as soon as they saw signs of opposition. So, in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, the great Jehovah guided them by the way of the Red Sea.

From Succoth to Etham in the edge of the wilderness was the next stage, and then the command was "turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon." The news¹ was carried to Pharaoh that the route was changed. Then he understood, what probably he all along suspected, that the people, instead of going for a three days' festival to Jehovah, and returning, intended to flee altogether out of Egypt. To follow with his 600 chariots and his horse-men was his instant resolve. He overtook them, as they were encamped by the shore of the Red Sea, somewhere near the modern town of Suez, past which the sea at that time appears to have flowed as far as the Bitter Lakes. Now they were within his power once more. The sea in front, the mountains to the south and the rear, and

¹ Exod. xiv. 5.

the Egyptian army to the rear and the north ;—every way was blocked ; escape seemed impossible. Well might the slave-bred Israelites cry out with fear. But Moses reassured them, and the cloudy pillar moved from the van to the rear, “ being cloud and darkness to the Egyptians, a light all night to the Israelites.” In the morning there was a dry passage for them across the bed of the sea. The strong east wind acting upon the ebb spring-tide had lowered the waters ;—the sea on their right and the lagoons and the marshes on their left formed walls of defence on either hand.

Pharaoh could only attack in the rear. He pursued after them into the midst of the sea, and then the returning tide, first softening the sand so that it was as if the Lord troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, flowed in upon them and overwhelmed them. To a man they were drowned, and “ Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore, and they believed the Lord and His servant Moses.”

Can we wonder that when they saw the great deliverance thus wrought, both leader and people “ sang His praise,”¹ Who had thus avenged them on their enemies? Noble indeed is that first outburst of Hebrew poetry with which they celebrated the overthrow of their enemies. Grand prelude is it to those centuries of prophetic and Messianic song to which the Kings and Prophets and Mothers of Israel gave utterance. The men sang,

“ Jehovah is a man of war,
Jehovah is His Name.”

And the women, with timbrels and with dances, led

¹ Psa. cvi. 12.

on by "Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron," answered them :—

"Sing ye to Jehovah, for He hath triumphed gloriously.
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."

The passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea was, as St. Paul tells us, a baptism,¹ because it was the separation for them from the bondage and idolatry of Egypt, and the commencement to them of a new life, the national life of freemen, bound to one another by the common bond of belief in one Jehovah, Who from henceforth should be their God and they His people.

Hence, in the Christian Church, this passage of the Israelites has ever been regarded as prefiguring the "mystical washing away of sin" in Holy Baptism, when he who is baptized "is regenerate, and grafted into the Body of Christ's Church."

From the shore of the Red Sea the Israelites "went out into the wilderness of Shur," or "the Wall," so called because the chief feature of this part of the desert is the high mountain wall or escarpment which bounds it on the north and east. For three days they journeyed in this wilderness, and found no water ; and when they did find it, it was so brackish or bitter, from the natron or carbonate of soda with which the soil is impregnated, that they could not drink it. These Marah waters were miraculously "healed," and a lesson of trustful obedience inculcated. The march was next to Elim, and thence once more to the sea coast, and so to the wilderness of Sin, where for the first time, six weeks after their leaving Egypt, we have notice of a

¹ 1 Cor. x. 2.

deficiency of bread. This was miraculously supplied with manna and quails. The manna was continued to them by a daily supply all through their desert wanderings, until they ate the corn of Canaan. It prefigured, as our Blessed Lord teaches us, His own coming down as the Bread of Life from Heaven,¹ and the spiritual sustenance which Christians find in the Supper of the Lord.²

After two more halts at Dophkah and Alush,³ places which cannot be identified, the Israelites pitched in Rephidim, a place of perhaps doubtful identification. Either from real lack of water, or because, as is more probable, they were barred from access to the wells by the powerful Amalekite tribe, God, in answer to the people's murmurings, gave them a miraculous supply of water from the rock. The rock smitten by Moses, which gave life to the Israelites dying from thirst, became the type of Jesus Christ, the true Rock, from Whom he that believeth, drawing of the Living Water, shall never thirst.

It was at Rephidim that the Israelites gained their first victory over the Amalekites, and here it was too that Moses, acting under the advice of Jethro, his father-in-law, who had brought to him his wife and his two sons, took the first step in giving the nation political life.

The next halting-place was the wilderness of Sinai itself, memorable for ever from what was now about to take place there. The camp was pitched in the wide plain of Er Rahah, upon which several valleys converge, and, "rising like a huge altar in front of the

¹ John vi. 49-51.

² 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

³ Numb. xxxiii. 12, 14.

congregation,"¹ was the mountain range of Sinai, with its foremost peak of Ras Susafeh, the veritable seat of the giving of the law, with its sheer precipitous sides, a mount indeed "which might be touched,"² but to touch which was death.³ Three days were given to the purifying and sanctifying the people, and then, on the third day, in the midst of "thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud," "Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai;" "and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." With such terrors was ushered in the giving of the law; and in this way the people were taught that God would make them His own "peculiar treasure," and that they should be "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." With this terrible sight, and with Moses as the Mediator of the Covenant now to be made, the Apostle contrasts the Mount Sion of the Christian, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant,⁴ and St. Peter regards the history of the Exodus and the giving of the law as typical of the Christian believers, who are, he says, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."⁵

¹ DEAN STANLEY, *Sinai and Palestine*.

³ Exod. xix. 12.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

² Heb. xii. 18.

⁴ Heb. xii. 22, 24.

LESSON XI.

MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS.

Read Exod. xx., xxiv., xxxii. to xxxiv., xl.; Lev. x. 1-7;
Numb. x. to xiv.

THE wilderness of Mount Sinai, in which we left the Israelites encamped in our last lesson, is a wide open plain of some considerable extent, surrounded on all sides by granite mountains, intersected by a number of fertile valleys, through many of which streams of clear water run. It was capable at the time of the Exodus of supporting a much larger population than at present. There are remains still of ancient cultivation, which, though gradually disappearing for the want of any kind of care, testify to the industry and hard work of former times. The halt of the children of Israel in this wilderness lasted for nearly a year. Its purpose was to afford time for giving them laws and a constitution, and so to raise them from a nation of slaves to one of free-men.

Soon after their arrival at Sinai, God revealed Himself to the people, and gave to them the Ten Commandments. But the mighty thunderings and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet "exceeding loud," so awed them that "they intreated the word

should not be spoken to them any more" directly¹ but through Moses, to whose report of God's commands they promised obedience. To him and to Aaron, who alone was permitted to accompany him, the first group of laws (Exod. xx. 22—xxiii.) was given, and then the covenant between God and the Israelites was solemnly ratified. The erected altar, the offered sacrifice, the blood sprinkled both on book and people, the words of the book read in the audience of the people, and their answer, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient;"—all these went to the dedication of that first covenant, which was the shadow and the type of the New Covenant which in after ages should be ratified by the shedding of the Blood of Jesus Christ.²

After this there was granted to Moses, Aaron, his two-sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of the people, a vision of the God of Israel,³ and then Moses was summoned into the Mount of God. Leaving Aaron and Hur in charge of the people, and accompanied by Joshua, Moses went up, and he "was in the mount forty days and forty nights." The next seven chapters (Exod. xxv.—xxxi.) are occupied with the instructions given to Moses in regard to the Ark, the Tabernacle, and all their furniture. At the same time God gave unto Moses "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."⁴ But the people, tired of the long delay, had persuaded Aaron to make them "a calf in Horeb."⁵ Combining the idolatry of Egypt with their reminiscences of the faith of their fathers, and with their as yet imperfect ideas

¹ Exod. xx. 19; Heb. xii. 19.

² Exod. xxiv. 3-8; Heb. ix. 18-21, xiii. 20.

³ Exod. xxiv. 9-11.

⁴ Exod. xxxi. 18.

⁵ Ps. cvi. 19, 20.

respecting Jehovah, they appear to have intended to worship Him under the form of this calf.¹ Breaking thus so quickly after its delivery the second commandment, the people "corrupted themselves," and aroused against themselves the fierce anger of the Lord. "Let me alone," God said, "that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." And now Moses had need of all the forbearance and love for his people which so constantly animated him. Nor was he wanting. With that disinterestedness and self-denial which seems to be implied in the epithet "meek,"²—a quality which in those days was not regarded as a virtue, and which Moses, therefore, ascribes to himself without meaning to praise himself,—he was now, and on other subsequent occasions, ready to stand in the breach, and to be himself the sufferer. There would have been nothing to his dishonour if he had silently accepted the dispensation of God. But the love of Moses for his people was too great for this. "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin"—is his broken prayer: "and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."³ In thus acting as a mediator Moses prefigured the One Great Mediator, JESUS CHRIST. The people are forgiven, but God will no longer be in the midst of them. Moses removed his tent, afar off without the camp,⁴ and called it "the Tent of Meeting," because in it he met and talked with God. But this removal is a great grief to Moses. Though an Angel be sent before them, to bring them into the Promised

¹ See Exod. xxxii. 5.

² Numb. xii. 3.

³ Exod. xxxii. 32.

⁴ Exod. xxxiii. 7. Our Authorized Version is wrong in translating here "tabernacle of the congregation." It was probably Moses' own tent, and used for the purpose of meeting God, until the real tabernacle, which is expressed by a different word, was erected.

Land, it is Jehovah's presence in the midst of them which is the assurance to them of their being His chosen people. For this divine Presence Moses pleads, and once more his prayer is granted ; and to reassure him a vision of the skirts of the Divine Glory is vouchsafed to him, and the Lord stood with him on the mount, and passed by, a Voice proclaiming, "the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth."¹ Moses spent another forty days and forty nights in the mount ; the tables of the testimony, that is, of the Ten Commandments, were renewed ; and once more he descended to the camp, the radiancy of the Divine Glory being, unawares to himself, reflected in his face. "And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses . . . they were afraid to come nigh him." And when² he had spoken God's commandments to them, he put a veil over his face, to shew, as St. Paul tells us, that under that old dispensation, before the brightness of the Father's glory was seen in Jesus Christ, that glory must be shrouded from men's eyes.

Some five or six months had probably now elapsed since the Exodus. The remainder of the first year was occupied in preparing for the erection of the Tabernacle, under the guidance of Bezaleel and Aholiab, the two men inspired by God for the purpose. The account of this, and of the erection of the Tabernacle on the first day of the new year, occupies the remaining chapters of the Book of Exodus.

The construction of the Tabernacle was in accordance with the pattern shewed to Moses in the mount, which, as

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6.

² The word "till" in our Authorized Version ought to be "when." Exod. xxxiv. 33 ; 2 Cor. iii. 13.

the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us,¹ was in reality a picture or prefiguring of the Christian dispensation.

When all was completed, and the erection accomplished, the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle, and over the tent which enclosed it there rested the Divine cloud. That cloud was to be henceforth the assurance to the Israelites that Jehovah was among them.

Immediately upon the erection of the Tabernacle, Moses set it apart, with the altar, and all their vessels and furniture, to the service of God, by sprinkling them with the anointing oil. Then too, with the same oil, and with solemn sacrifices, Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priests' office. The ceremonies of consecration were repeated on each of seven successive days, and at last, upon the eighth day, the priests entered upon their office, and offered sin-offerings and burnt-offerings for themselves and the people. Then Moses and Aaron blessed the people, and "the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering."² The religious enthusiasm of the people was aroused. From the surging crowd in front of the Tabernacle there arose a great shout, and, stirred with an unwonted awe, they fell on their faces. But this day of national rejoicing ended with a great sorrow. Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron, carried away perhaps by the general excitement and rejoicing, were careless in observing the rules given them by God, and offered "strange fire"³ unto the Lord. Whatever this may have been, and its real nature is doubtful, the offering of it was punished with

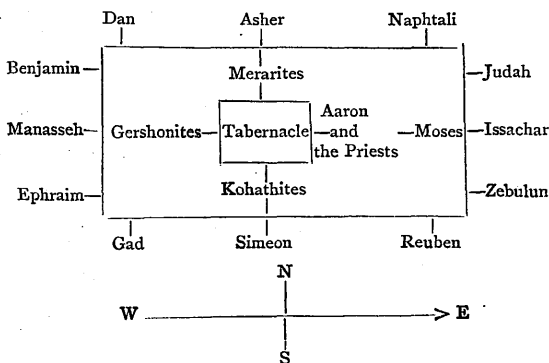
¹ Heb. viii. 5.

² Lev. ix. 23.

³ Lev. x. 1.

death, and Aaron's joy was blighted by the terrible visitation.¹

The Book of Numbers opens with God's command to Moses on the first day of the second month of the second year to number the people. This census was facilitated by the record of the offerings already made for the Tabernacle,² so that it took now but a short time, perhaps only one day, to accomplish.³ In the previous month the Passover had been solemnly observed for the second time, on the anniversary of the Exodus. Then at last on the 20th day of this second month (about May), "the cloud was taken up from off the Tabernacle of the testimony," the camp before Sinai was broken up, and the march for the Promised Land begun. The order of the march is minutely described, and may be illustrated by the following diagram :—



¹ Lev. x. 19. With the exception of chapters viii.—x. and xxiv. 10-23, the whole of the Book of Leviticus is taken up with various laws and regulations.

² Exod. xxxviii. 24-29; comp. Exod. xxx. 13.

³ Numb. i. 18.

The tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun led the way, and the rear was brought up by the children of Rachel. Hence the Psalmist sings, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth. Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up Thy strength and come and save us."¹ At each setting forward of the Ark, they sang the song:—

"Rise up Jehovah, and let Thine enemies be scattered,
And let them which hate Thee flee before Thee."²

And when the Ark rested, they sang again:—

"Return, O Jehovah, unto the many thousands of Israel."³

This mighty and joyous march of a great host was not to last very long. They had travelled probably but three days' journey⁴ from Sinai when murmuring and discontent broke out at Taberah, by reason of the hardness of the march. The punishment of fire was speedy and terrible.

A very much more serious revolt broke out at the next halting-station, which from the punishment which followed was called Kibroth-hattaavah, or "The graves of lust."⁵ The hardships of the wilderness journey proved too much for the mixed multitude which went up with the Israelites, and they succeeded only too easily in dragging down the children of Israel to their own low level. The revolt took a double form:—(1) a questioning of Moses' divine mission, and (2) doubt of Jehovah's power to feed them with flesh in the wilderness. To appease the first, the Spirit of God came

¹ Psa. lxxx. 1, 2.

² Numb. x. 35; Psa. lxviii. 1, 2; Psa. cxxxii. 8.

³ Numb. x. 36; Psa. lxxx. 14.

⁴ Numb. x. 33.

⁵ Numb. xi. 34.

upon seventy elders of the people, for a short time, and though we are not told the subject of their prophecy, yet it was, not improbably, an unwilling testimony to the authority of Moses.¹ The inspiration of these men offered the occasion for that display of Moses' gentle spirit which, in this as in other things a type of Jesus Christ, envied not the prophetic powers of Eldad and Medad, though not exercised, in the proper place, before the Tabernacle.² The doubt of Jehovah's power was set at rest by the sending the quails.³ Of these they ate for a month, and then came the punishment for their sin, in a terrible disease engendered as it would seem by a surfeit of the birds' flesh.⁴

Hazereth was the next station, and here again a sore trial awaited Moses. His own relatives, Miriam and Aaron, elated probably by their own gifts of God, and certainly disliking a marriage which Moses had made with an Ethiopian woman, questioned his authority. Moses was not eager to vindicate himself,⁵ but God took the matter into His own hands, and declared that Moses stood on a higher level than any other prophets, and in a much more intimate relation with Himself. Aaron was not punished, except by rebuke, because of his priesthood, but Miriam was

¹ Numb. xi. 24-30. Eldad and Medad perhaps refused to come to the Tabernacle with the others, yet in spite of themselves they had to bear the same witness. "Did not cease" (ver. 25) ought to be "did not continue." The gift was only temporary. So rightly the LXX. These elders must not be confounded with those of Exod. xviii. and Deut. i.

² Compare Numb. xi. 29; Luke ix. 49, 50.

³ Not to be confounded with the quails of Exod. xvi. 13.

⁴ See Hengstenberg, and the *Speaker's Commentary* on Numb. xi. Compare also Psa. lxxviii. 30, 31.

⁵ Numb. xii. 1-3. Probably Zipporah was dead, and this was a second wife.

struck with leprosy, of which she was healed by Moses' intercession. The affair caused at least a delay of a week in the march.¹

The narrative now carries us on to the borders of the Promised Land. The people are in the wilderness of Paran, at or near Kadesh. As a concession to their weakness of faith, God permitted twelve men, one from each tribe, to be sent as spies of the country. They were forty days absent; and when they returned, about the middle of August, they brought with them a bunch of first ripe grapes, and gave a good account of the land. But ten of them faithlessly represented that it would be impossible for them to conquer the country. In vain did Joshua and Caleb try to still the murmurings of the people, at the risk even of their own lives.² It was the crowning rebellion, and again God would have destroyed them had not "Moses stood before Him in the breach to turn away His wrath."³ God pardoned, but yet He punished. For the act of utter unbelief the whole nation is condemned to wander in the wilderness, until all the men of that generation, except Joshua and Caleb, shall have died. Not one of the rest shall enter the Promised Land. Slowly and imperceptibly, so to speak, shall they die away, until not one is left.⁴

¹ Numb. xii. 15.

² Numb. xiv. 10.

³ Psa. cvi. 23.

⁴ It is worthy of remark, that as the tenth plague was the most terribly severe, so this, the tenth temptation (Numb. xiv. 22) is visited with by far the greatest punishment.

LESSON XII.

THE PENAL WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS.

Read Numb. xvi., xvii., xx., xxii. to xxiv., xxxi. 1-12; Deut. xxxiv.

THE history of the next thirty-eight years is almost, if not entirely a blank. In melancholy silence Moses passes over these years of penal wandering. The people were under the cloud of God's displeasure. Moreover, so far as they were concerned, the Covenant was practically in abeyance. During all that long time circumcision and the Passover were suspended. That it was a period of frequent discontent seems almost certain.¹ But Moses mentions only one instance,—the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, because it had to do with the Divine regulations for the civil and religious government of the people. The precise time of this event is left uncertain, but it was probably towards the end of the penal wanderings.² The leader of the revolt was Korah, who desired to put down what he considered the unwarrantable assumption of the priesthood by the family of Aaron. With him two princes of the tribe of Reuben associated them-

¹ Compare Psa. xcv. 10; Heb. iii. 17.

² See Numb. xx. 3. Psal. cvi. 17 mentions it out of its proper order before the worship of the calf.

selves, whose object was probably the assertion, in opposition to Moses, of the right of the tribe of Reuben, as that of the eldest son, to the leadership of the nation. Both Korah and Dathan and Abiram based their claim upon the promise given at Mount Sinai.¹ They forgot that before they could be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, they must learn obedience to God's will. The punishment was swift and terrible. The Levite section, whose members offered unauthorized fire, was destroyed by fire, and the Reubenites perished in an earthquake.

The only other incidents recorded of these thirty-eight years are the stoning of the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day,² and the budding of Aaron's rod, a proof of the authority which God had given him, and a type of the everliving Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

At the commencement of the fortieth year³ of the wanderings, the people were again at Kadesh, ready once more to enter the Promised Land. All, or nearly all, of the generation which had rebelled thirty-eight years before are dead; a new life and a renewed hope animates the nation. Yet, on the first trial, the faith of this younger generation wavered, as that of their fathers had done, and in the same way. *This time the leaders, Moses and Aaron, were involved in the sin and its punishment.* In sorrow and despondency, perhaps at the evidence of the same stiff-necked unbelief as ever in the people, they were betrayed into rash hasty words, and weak in faith themselves, failed

¹ Exod. xix. 6.

² Numb. xv. 32-36.

³ The events of this year are recorded in the 20th and following chapters of Numbers.

to "sanctify God in the eyes of the people."¹ In their punishment we should see the plain intention of a warning to the Israelites. "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes."² The people too are punished by being compelled to reach Canaan by a long circuitous route, instead of marching straight up into the country. The journey also is rendered the more wearisome and painful from the refusal of the Edomites to allow them a passage through their territory. They move to Mount Hor, and at one of the stations in its immediate neighbourhood, Mosera, Aaron dies, although to preserve the dignity of the priesthood the actual sight of his death is hidden from all save Moses and Eleazer.³

During the thirty days' halt occasioned by the mourning for Aaron, King Arad the Canaanite obtained a slight success over the Israelites, for which vengeance was inexorably exacted afterwards.⁴

The march now for a time lay through the "terrible" wilderness of the Arabah, and again the people murmured, being "discouraged because of the way." The poisonous serpents of this region, miraculously multiplied, became the instruments of their punishment, and the cause of the erection of that wonderful type of Jesus Christ, the brazen serpent.

But the toils of the march were drawing to a close. As soon as they had gone sufficiently far to the south

¹ Numb. xx. 12. In what the sin of Moses and Aaron consisted has been a matter of much dispute. The most probable suggestion is that given in the *Bible Educator*, p. 180, viz. : that the real sin was a want of faith in not regarding the stoppage of the water supply as a sign that they were about to enter the Promised Land.

² Deut. i. 37.

³ Numb. xx. 22-29; Deut. x. 6.

⁴ Compare Numb. xxi. 1-3; Judges i. 17.

and the east to turn the flank of the Edomite country, they bent their steps northward, skirting on its east side the land of Moab, with which country the Israelites had been forbidden to make war, and crossed the river Arnon, which flowed into the Dead Sea at about the middle of its eastern side. Though the country north of this river had originally belonged to Moab, it had been lately conquered by Sihon, king of the Amorites.¹ Through this territory Moses asked leave of passage from Sihon, which was haughtily refused. No command of God, or feeling of brotherhood, as in the case of Edom, restrained the Israelites from opposing Sihon's attack upon them. He was utterly defeated, his country taken possession of, and the headquarters of the Israelites, pursuing their now western course, were established "in the plains of Moab,"² a flat, depressed stretch of country some ten or twelve miles broad, lying along the eastern side of the Jordan, near its entrance into the Dead Sea. It was bounded on the east by the Mountains of Abarim,³ of which Pisgah (or Nebo) formed one of the most prominent spurs.

The defeat of Sihon was quickly followed by that of Og, king of Bashan, the territory lying to the north of the Amorite country.⁴

Nothing now lay between the Israelites and their promised inheritance but the Jordan. They were no longer a nation in disgrace, but a people full of vigour and ardour. Before however they could cross over Jordan, certain regulations respecting the division of the land had to be made, and a successor appointed

¹ Numb. xxi. 26.

² Still so called (Numb. xxii. 1), though no longer properly within the bounds of that country.

³ Compare Numb. xxi. 11.

⁴ Numb. xxi. 33-35.

to their great leader, who was not himself to be permitted to lead his people into Canaan. The time necessary for these things, and for consolidating probably their conquests of Sihon and Og, occasioned a lengthened halt in the plain of Moab for some two or three months.¹ It was during this time that the visit took place of Balaam to Balak. The latter, frightened by the successes of the Israelites over his neighbours, determined to send for the renowned and dreaded sorcerer of the east country (Mesopotamia), in the hope that he might be induced to curse Israel, and so secure their destruction. Balaam, living in the ancient home of the Hebrew race, had gathered there, from lingering traditions, some knowledge doubtless of the true God, and we may well believe that the fame of the Exodus had reached even the remoter regions of Mesopotamia.² But his worship of God was mingled with much that was superstitious and wrong.³ To this man God had given great spiritual as well as natural gifts. But He had not taken from him the exercise of his own will. That will Balaam allowed to override him when the temptation came. "His heart was not right in the sight of God."⁴ Had it been, he would not have dallied

¹ The chronology of this fortieth year seems to be as follows:—

1st Month.—Arrival at Kadesh, and death of Miriam. March to Mount Hor, and on

5th Month, 1st day, death of Aaron.

6th Month, 1st day.—March from Mount Hor to the Plains of Moab—reached in about six weeks probably.

7th Month, middle.—Conquests of Sihon and Og.

9th Month, middle.—Episode of Balaam.

10th Month.—Second numbering. War upon the Midianites.

11th Month.—Last address of Moses. Rehearsal of the Law.

12th Month.—Death of Moses.

² Exod. ix. 16; xv. 14. Compare Exod. xviii. 1-12.

³ Numb. xxiv. 1.

⁴ Acts viii. 21.

with the temptation when presented to him, but would rather have recoiled from any proposal to curse God's chosen people. Loving the wages of unrighteousness,¹ and extorting from God permission to accompany the messengers of Balak, he was given up in the end to a reprobate mind. His fall however did not come all at once. It was gradual. For a time even he was borne away by the thoughts suggested by the glorious prophecies to which he was giving utterance. There is every appearance, that while he was announcing "the visions of the Almighty," he did himself desire those blessings for Israel which he declared were in store for them. But when the hour of inspiration was over, the thought of the forfeited honours and rewards overcame him, and by way of making a last grasp at them, he suggested the idea of overcoming Israel by causing them to sin against God.² And he partially succeeded. But the plague which his evil counsel brought upon the people was stayed by the faith of Phinehas; and the man who for the sake of mammon had put away his good conscience, and of his faith made shipwreck,³ perished amid the slaughter of the Midianites, which followed quickly upon their sin against Israel.⁴ The history of Balaam teaches us how great gifts, even great spiritual gifts, may be misused and abused unless exercised "in purity of heart," and sanctified with prayer for God's grace.

Immediately after the snare set for the Israelites by the Midianites, acting under the advice of Balaam, and before the war upon the Midianites, Moses was commanded to number the Israelites a second time. The

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11.

³ 1 Tim. i. 19.

² Numb. xxv. 1; xxxi. 16.

⁴ Numb. xxxi. 8.

most noticeable features of this census are : (1) that notwithstanding the great mortality of the last thirty-eight years the decrease of the whole number amounted only to 1820, and would have been really an increase, but for the deaths of 24,000, in the plague following upon the sin with Midian ; and (2) that the tribe of Simeon shews a diminution of nearly one-third of its numbers. This great diminution was probably owing to this tribe having taken the chief part in the late sin, and having consequently suffered most.¹ For the same reason we may suppose it was, that in blessing the twelve tribes before his death Moses omitted all mention of Simeon.

The solemn time of the great leader's death is now fast approaching. It wants but two months to the end of the fortieth year. Moses therefore gathers his people around him, and, with unabated vigour of eye and voice, delivers to them his last charge. We seem to see the noble and stately figure of Israel's Lawgiver standing on the plains of Moab, and uttering loving words of exhortation. His eye kindles into keener brightness as he recounts the mercies of "all these forty years" passed "in the great and terrible wilderness ;" and yet again they seem dimmed with tears as, with passionate sorrow and sad forebodings, he looks forward to the future, and sees the people "utterly corrupting" themselves, and "evil befalling them."

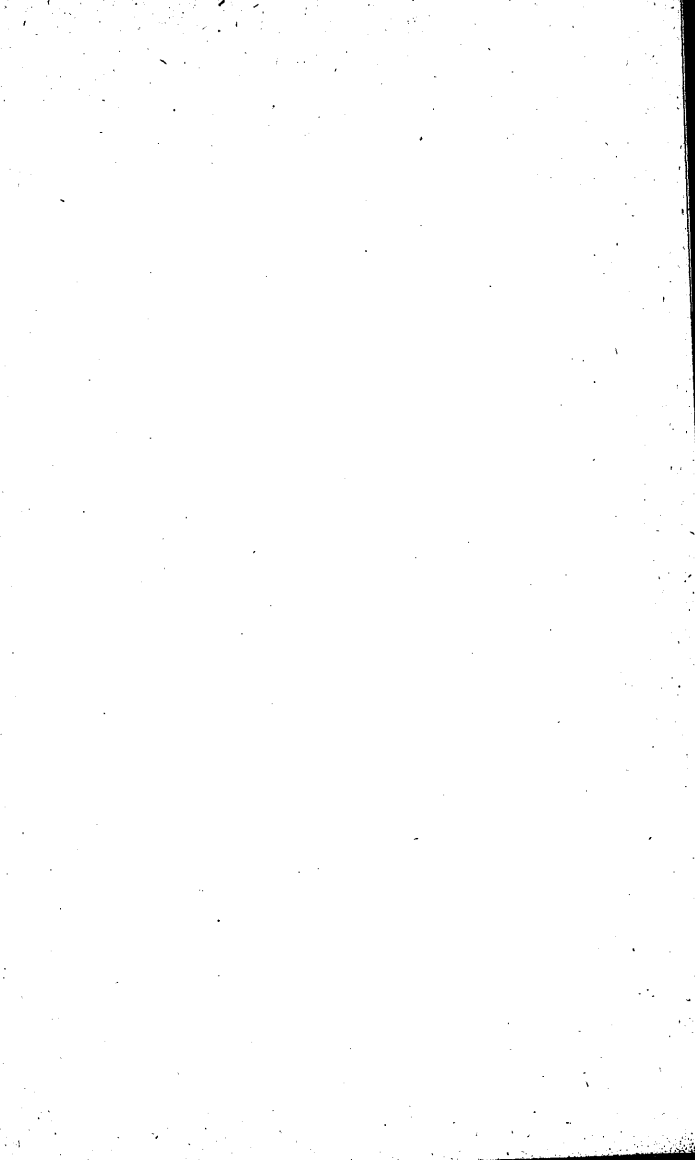
Moses, as the Prophet of his people—as Leader, Lawgiver and Mediator,—stands alone, far above all his nation, the type and forerunner of the still greater Prophet, of whose Advent he himself foretold.² Acting under the Divine guidance, speaking with God face to

¹ See Numb. xxv. 14.

² Deut. xviii. 18 ; John i. 45 ; Acts iii. 22, vii. 37.

face, and the medium through whom a higher law than any yet known—imperfect though it was,¹—was given to the chosen people, Moses prefigured Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, One with the Father, who gave to His disciples a new law, the Law of Love, and shewed them how to interpret the Law of Moses, lifting it thus from the lower region of the letter into the higher region of the Spirit.

¹ Ezek. xx. 25.



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THE CATECHISM AND LITURGY

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BY THE EDITOR

J. P. NORRIS, B.D.

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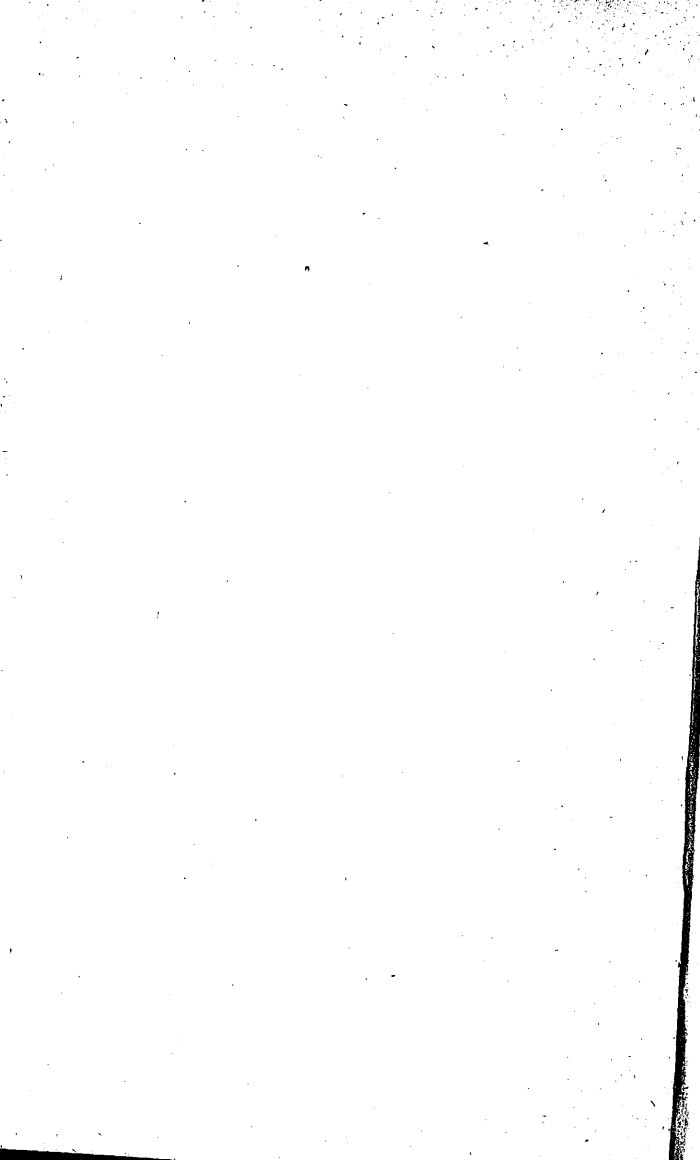
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LESSON I.

JOSHUA AND THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN.

JOSHUA, the man chosen by God to succeed Moses as the leader of the Israelites, must have been born towards the close of the long captivity in Egypt, during the darkest and heaviest gloom of that period, when "the Children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage." He was distinguished by the qualities most necessary in a soldier—courage, simplicity and forethought, and is first brought before us as the commander of the Israelites at the battle of Rephidim.¹ From this time we hear of him as "the minister of Moses." As he descends from the Mount, and hears the noise of the people, his thought is at once that of a soldier: "There is a noise of war in the camp;"² and when Eldad and Medad prophesy, as he thinks out of due order, his love of discipline and of obedience to the leader is shocked. With something of the spirit afterwards shown by those "sons of thunder," who ministered to a greater Leader, Joshua exclaims, "My Lord Moses, forbid them."³ Sent by Moses with others to spy out the land, he and Caleb alone dare to resist

¹ Exod. xvii. 10.

² Exod. xxxii. 17.

³ Numb. xi. 28.

the evil report brought by the others, and to incur the risk of stoning.

Such was the man, in his earlier years, who was called by God to so great a work, that in some respects it may be thought greater even than that of Moses. For all the enthusiasm caused by the near remembrance of Egyptian bondage, and of the triumph of that day when the waters overwhelmed their enemies, must have greatly passed away. It was a new generation which Joshua was to lead into Canaan, a people who had grown up in the wilderness, and almost lost the ordinances of God, for they were uncircumcised, and therefore unable to keep the Passover. The task seemed hard enough. What were the special means by which Joshua was to accomplish it?

His natural endowments are far more those of the soldier than of the man of learning, and for this very reason, perhaps, we do not find in him that shrinking from the task imposed, so deeply felt by Moses. To aid him in his work, he has the training of his master, the reiterated command, "Be strong, and very courageous," certain direct intimations from God, with at least one distinct appearance of the Divine Presence, and above all, "the book of the law." Joshua is the first person to whom "the book" is continually presented as a guide in life; he is the first of a long race of successors, whether Jewish or Christian, whose course in this life has been modified and directed by the written Word. "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua," "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,"—words re-echoed by Joshua in his old age when he charged

the elders of Israel, "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses."¹

Moreover, his change of name from Hoshea (Salvation) to Joshua (God the Saviour) taught him that in the strength of God, and not in his own, the people would be saved. Yet he could not have understood all that was bound up in that name, now familiar to us, and to all ages, under its Greek form—JESUS.²

Thus aided and strengthened and solemnly set apart by God, Joshua accepted, without one word of shrinking or of doubt, the post of leader of the people. He began his preparations with soldierly forethought; prepared victuals, sent out spies to learn the state of the country, and marched the people down to Jordan, which now having overflowed its banks, lay broad, and apparently impassable, before the Israelites.

We may imagine with what feelings Joshua surveyed the Jordan the night before he crossed it; it was now at its greatest width, lighted by the full Passover moon, and we can fancy how it may have reminded him of the river of Egypt which he had seen in his youth. Only he and Caleb had ever seen such a sight before. The multitude, miraculously aided by God, pass this seemingly impassable river, they are circumcised, and again they celebrate the Passover, while the manna, their food while wandering and unsettled, ceases. Now, too, Joshua is cheered by a heavenly Visitant, the Captain of the Lord's host,

¹ Exod. xvii. 14; Josh. i. 8, xxiii. 6.

² Under this form of the name Joshua is always mentioned in the New Testament: Acts vii. 45; Heb. iv. 8.

to Whom, as Abraham at the tent-door and Moses at the burning bush, he does homage.

The conquest of Palestine, under the leadership of Joshua, may be divided into three stages. The first of these placed the southern part of the valley of Jordan in the hands of the invaders. A camp was formed at Gilgal, and the march continued to Jericho, whose walls miraculously fell before these desert wanderers, who could never before have beheld a fortified city.

Such a conquest as this taught the lesson so often re-echoed by the best and truest spirits among them: "They gat not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them."¹ "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

This faith, however, could only show itself by obedience; and the check which the invading host met with before Ai was caused by forgetfulness of this. To Achan the spoils of a conquered city might seem of right to belong to the conquerors, and the distinction made between precious things kept for the treasury of the Lord,² and the same things kept for private use, appeared perhaps to him useless, but in disobeying God's command he "transgressed the covenant of the Lord."³ It was only after his death, and the utter destruction of "the accursed thing," that the people could again conquer. Ai captured, Joshua, obedient to the command of Moses, read the Law, and proclaimed the blessings and cursings from Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. From thence he returns to the

¹ Psa. xliv. 3.

² Josh. vi. 19.

³ Josh. vii. 15.

camp at Gilgal, and the first stage of the conquest is ended.

The second was opened by an aggressive move on the part of the Canaanites ; the different tribes combining together, commenced the attack by falling on the Gibeonites, who had allied themselves with the invaders. In passing, we should remark the faith and truth with which the promise made by Joshua and the elders was kept, though won from them by deceit. At once they marched from Gilgal to the relief of the besieged city, and then ensued the great battle of Beth-horon, which has been truly called one of the decisive battles of the world. In it we recognise not only the victory of the Israelites over the Canaanites, but of faith over evil, of the Church over the world. Aided again by God, Who sent a mighty hailstorm in the faces of their foe, "the people avenged themselves upon their enemies." Long did they remember the day; and they sang in after years how Joshua stood and prayed¹—

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon !
And thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon !
And the sun stood still,
And the moon stayed,
Until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies."

The whole of the centre and south of Palestine, with all the towns, fell into the hands of the invaders. Once more the Israelites returned to the camp at Gilgal, and so ended the second stage of the conquest.

Again, the third and last stage is brought about by a league formed among the Canaanitish tribes. The

¹ The Book of Jasher, from which this fragment of poetry is taken, was probably a collection of national odes, and is referred to again (2 Sam. i. 18) as containing the dirge composed by David over Saul and Jonathan.

course of the struggle reminds us somewhat of the Norman conquest of our own land. The men of Sussex and Kent were conquered first; the men of Devon at another time; those of Lincoln and East Anglia at yet others; and all rose in arms at such different times, that the resistance assumed rather the appearance of a series of rebellions than of a national defence. So it was also in Canaan at the time of Joshua. The south and centre having been subdued, the northern tribes rose in arms.

The Jordan, as it flows down from Lebanon towards the Dead Sea, passes through two lakes, the Lake or Waters of Merom,¹ and the Sea of Galilee, hallowed for all time by most sacred memories. Near the former of these, perhaps on its shores (not then, probably, so impassable from the thick jungle of reeds as they are now), was assembled the largest army that the Israelites had yet encountered. It was under the command of the king of Hazor, who bore the name of Jabin, which appears to have been a special appellation of those kings, like that of Pharaoh in Egypt. The army possessed also a great number of horses and chariots, which were entirely new to the Israelites, who fought on foot. A special encouragement was therefore given by God to Joshua, "Be not afraid because of them." By a rapid and sudden march, Joshua and his "people of war" fell on the Canaanitish host, and utterly defeated them, chasing them far northwards, and specially destroying, as God had commanded, the dreaded horses and chariots. After this battle, Hazor was burnt, and all the cities of the confederate kings taken. Thus ends the third and last stage of Joshua's conquest.

¹ Josh. xi. 7.

LESSON II.

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE TRIBES.

MUCH yet remained to be done before it could be said that the work was accomplished, and that Israel had truly entered upon God's heritage. It would appear that many of the towns once taken by the Israelites were afterwards re-occupied by their former inhabitants. Of these Hebron, Jerusalem, and Bethel are examples. In many other parts of the land the Canaanites still dwelt, the task of driving them out was hard, and the Israelites seem quickly to have lost all lively sense of their mission from God as exterminators of evil. While Joshua lived, however, it was not so.

"Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua,"¹ and the activity of the great soldier never relaxed. He commenced at once the division of the land among the tribes; but it is characteristic of his history that though apparently the only commander in war, in this work of dividing the land Joshua was associated with Eleazar the high-priest and the other elders.² We have compared the conquest of Canaan to that of England by the Normans. The description

¹ Josh. xxiv. 31.

² Josh. xix. 51.

of the division of the land given in the book of Joshua has also been likened to a great work of the Norman conqueror, and has been called "the Domesday Book of Palestine."

Two methods seem to have been employed in the division of the land ; the one an apportionment by lot of so much land given as by the whole state to an individual tribe, the other a permission granted by Joshua to certain chiefs to take possession of special conquests made by themselves. To this last method belongs the grant of Hebron to Caleb, the only contemporary of Joshua, and the first hero of the great tribe of Judah, that tribe, which rising gradually in importance through the sacred history, has left its name in constant use among us in the word "Jew." In the south of Palestine Judah had his inheritance ; it was the land most abounding in vineyards, and thus most fit for that tribe of whom Jacob had spoken as "binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine." Judah also possessed the mountains known to us in the New Testament as "the hill country of Judæa," the "wilderness" by the shores of the Dead Sea and the sea coast, where, however, dwelt the Philistines. South of Judah, Simeon had the border land of Palestine, including Abraham's former dwelling, Beersheba. To Benjamin was given a small portion north of Judah, including Jericho and the first conquests, and the as yet unconquered town of Jerusalem. Dan had his portion on the sea coast, afterwards enlarged by an addition in the north. The great tribe of Ephraim, with Issachar and one half of Manasseh, possessed the centre, while the north was divided between Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. East of the Jordan, Reuben,

Gad, and the other half of Manasseh received the portion given them by Moses. They had loyally kept the promise they had made : first of all the tribes they had marched over Jordan, they had obeyed Joshua in all that he commanded, and now with his blessing he dismissed them to that pastoral land, which they had desired.

But the Israelites were not only to be a nation, but also a Church, a people separate from others, because they alone possessed the true knowledge of God. From the single patriarch Abraham, from the one family of Jacob, from the shepherds and slaves of Egypt, and the wandering tribes of the desert, the chosen people of God has become a settled nation ; and now it must be separated from the evil around, and confirmed in the true worship.

The first of these purposes—the separation of the chosen people—would have been accomplished had the Israelites fulfilled God's command, and thoroughly exterminated the Canaanites. The judgment on the Canaanites had been delayed for many years ; to Abraham God had said, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."^x Since then they seem to have "filled up the measure of their fathers," and as their very worship and sacred rites were licentious and sensual, their very neighbourhood became contaminating. Thus it was that the Israelites, not perfectly fulfilling God's command, quickly fell into the same impure idolatry.

For the establishment of the true worship Joshua took means in his lifetime. The priestly caste was kept distinct : "to the Levites he gave none inheri-

^x Gen. xv. 16.

tance;" "the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance." In Shiloh, within the boundary of his own central tribe of Ephraim, he set up the tabernacle made by Moses, with the ark of God, and sanctifying what might seem a mere affair of worldly business, he cast the lots for the inheritance "in Shiloh before the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."¹

As the time drew near when the aged leader of the people was to be taken from them, he ceased not to urge on them the full accomplishment of the will of God; the spirit of the soldier still breathes through all he says: "If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country and cut down for thyself . . . if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee."² "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land?"³ And at the last he twice assembled the people to recount to them God's mercies, to warn them of the dangers of contact with "these nations, these that remain among you," and to renew solemnly the covenant between them and God. "Put away," he said, "the strange gods which are among you." Once more they solemnly chose Jehovah for their God, and Joshua, as his manner was, raised a stone in remembrance and as a witness. His death followed soon after. The upright soldier, the second leader of the people, the last survivor of the Exodus, passed away, but so far as it lay in his hands his work was accomplished. The imperfect fulfilment of God's will was due to no neglect of his; he was able even to say when he dismissed the Trans-Jordanic tribes, "The Lord your God hath given rest unto your brethren;"⁴ and he had truly brought the people from

¹ Josh. xix. 51.

³ Josh. xviii. 3.

² Josh. xvii. 15.

⁴ Josh. xxii. 4.

the restless wanderings of the wilderness, through battles and struggles, to the Promised Land and a settled habitation. And yet their after history tells that it was far from perfect rest or peace that they inherited. Constant wars, frequent bondage and serving of their enemies, mark their troubled story until the time of the great Captivity. For that Promised Land was but a type of perfect rest, and from the imperfection of that type is taught an early longing for immortality. "If Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day."¹ "But now, they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."² "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."³

¹ Heb. iv. 8.² Heb. xi. 16.³ Heb. iv. 9.

LESSON III.

THE JUDGES OF THE SOUTHERN TRIBES.

AFTER the death of Joshua the children of Israel were governed by Judges until the time of the establishment of the Monarchy. How long this period lasted it is impossible now to say with anything like certainty. But we must remember that the history is fragmentary; at one time it tells us of what was happening among the Danites and the Philistines on the sea coast, at another of the wars of the northern tribes, at another of those east of the Jordan. We must remember that the "rests of the land" and the servitudes by no means extended over the whole of Palestine, and that they probably often coincided in point of time. Thus, while one tribe rested or triumphed over its enemies, another might be in bondage. The Judges also never appear to have borne rule over all the tribes as Joshua did, but at the most over their own and the surrounding ones. It is clear that during such a time of unsettled, changing government, the danger threatening the nation must have been disunion. Instead of becoming one people and one Church, they were in danger of falling asunder into at least some four or five sections, with different leaders,

different interests, and at last even different forms of worship. To protect them from this danger and incline them to union, they had, first, the reiterated command to separate themselves from the surrounding nations, and, second, the common centre of worship in the tabernacle raised at Shiloh. To this all Israelites were bound to go up three times a year to keep the feasts, and we can conceive of no better mode of producing a feeling of union than this constant meeting of men of different tribes at one place for one worship, coupled with a strong feeling of separation from all other people. So separated from the heathen, and so worshipping the one God, they must feel themselves one people, and realize that they had but one king, Jehovah. But they failed to learn this grand lesson of unity ; first, because they did not keep themselves wholly separate from the Canaanites, and secondly because the wars and unsettled state which this disobedience brought upon them undoubtedly prevented the regular going up of all to worship at Shiloh. Accordingly the danger of utter disunion became so great, that they gave up at last all hope of rising to this great ideal, and asked for an earthly king, that they might be one people under him. The whole history of this intervening period between the first conquest under Joshua and the time of Samuel is evidently a collection of narratives,—not one continuous narrative. It will be more convenient therefore, instead of going straight through the Book of Judges, to take the tribes by groups, according to the parts of the country they inhabited.

The Southern Tribes.

The most southern tribe was SIMEON. Joined with Judah,¹ this tribe subdued the southern Canaanites, but its members did not "multiply, like to the children of Judah."² The great tribe of JUDAH possessed the country immediately north of the Simeonites, and seem almost from the first to have been isolated from the rest of Israel. From among them came the first of the Judges. Othniel, the son of Kenaz, was of kin to Caleb, and had married his daughter Achsah, and thus may have been the man of greatest importance in the tribe. As the conqueror of Chushan-rishathaim he gained a yet greater name.³ This is the first recorded foreign invasion of the land after the coming of the Israelites, and was apparently a Mesopotamian or Aramæan⁴ invasion of the south. Othniel, the deliverer, became the judge of the people, uniting, as the other judges did, the office of judge with that of military leader.⁵ "He judged Israel, and went out to war." Of all the judges alike, it is said that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon them," and enabled them to judge. So sacred was the office held to be, and so divine the power given, that the judges of a later day are even sometimes spoken of as "gods."⁶ After the wars of Othniel we hear of no more victories gained by the tribe of Judah. Its history is mainly now of a peaceful character.

The Book of Ruth, the story of one family of Judah,

¹ Judg. i. 3.

² 1 Chron. iv. 27.

³ Judg. iii. 8, 9.

⁴ Aram-naharaim (the highland country between the two rivers, *i.e.* Tigris and Euphrates) was the country of Nahor (Gen. xxiv. 10, A. V. "Mesopotamia"), and is called also Padan-Aram (Gen. xxv. 20).

⁵ It is worthy of remark that neither Othniel nor any other judge, except Eli, and perhaps Samuel, was of the tribe of Levi.

⁶ Psa. lxxxii. 1, 6.

is really an episode belonging to the Book of Judges. We cannot fix the time of that famine which caused Elimelech, with his wife and sons, to leave Bethlehem-Judah, and travel away to those mountains of Moab which are so clearly seen from Jerusalem, across the deep Jordan valley. There, in the land of Moab, took place that marriage of Mahlon with Ruth the Moabitess, which, though contrary to the law, was surely blessed abundantly by God, whether from regard to the characters of those concerned, or in consideration of their exiled condition. The story is familiar to us all, yet it is ever new, and affords ever fresh lessons which may be applied to the present daily life of England. Still, even now, we recognise Boaz, "the mighty man of wealth," in his generosity and care for his dependants, as the best pattern for the farmer or employer of labour; still we recognise in the modesty and humility of Ruth a lovely example to the gleaner or to those whom we too sadly call "the field-hands." But in truth Ruth is not only an example of these gentler virtues; she combines with them a courage which led her to leave her own country and kinsfolk, and to brave what might have been the disdain of others, and a steadfast cleaving not only to her husband's mother, but to her husband's God.

Was the reward given to so much faith and piety only a happy marriage, a wealthy home, and a name among the people of the tribe of Judah? Not only this, though this was much. Once more in the sacred volume we meet the name of Ruth, not now in the Old Testament but in the New. St. Matthew tells us, "Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat

Obed of Ruth.”¹ How many thoughts do these few words supply us with! Taken back to the first conquest, we remember the courage and the kindness of her who hid the spies, and who was the first in Jericho to declare “the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath,”—example henceforth to the Church of Christ of faith and of its operation through works.² Of Rahab, the earlier writer tells us: “She dwelleth in Israel even unto this day;” the later shows her to us as the wife of Salmon, son of Nahshon, “captain of the children of Judah,”³ and the mother of Boaz. And thus Rahab of Jericho and Ruth the Moabitess have their names for ever written among the ancestors of David and of David’s greater Son, the promised “Seed of the woman.” First in this story we begin to take an interest in Bethlehem, “the House of David,” and in the corn-fields where Ruth gleaned, and in it we have “the first appearance on the scene of what may by anticipation be called even then the Holy Family.”⁴

To the north of Judah was established the tribe of BENJAMIN, the smallest of all the tribes, which occupied the most hilly part of Palestine and the chief of the passes that give entrance either from the Jordan valley on the east, or the maritime plain on the west into the interior of the country. In the possession of Benjamin were many renowned cities, such as Bethel and Mizpeh, to which the Tabernacle (with the Ark) appears to have been occasionally moved from Shiloh, and which thus acquired a sacred character. The site of the ruined Jericho (the City of Palm-trees)

¹ Matt. i. 5.

³ Numb. ii. 3.

² Comp. Heb. xi. 31; James ii. 25.

⁴ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, i. 305.

was also within the border of Benjamin, while Jerusalem (still in the possession of the Jebusites) lay as a debateable ground between that tribe and Judah. The character of the tribe of Benjamin appears to have been fierce and obstinate, thus perhaps fulfilling the prophecy of Jacob, "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf."¹ Many notices shew us that the men of this tribe were renowned as archers, and by a special dexterity in slinging stones with their left hand.² Their history in the Book of Judges is one of mingled shame, defeat and triumph. They failed on their first settlement in dislodging the Jebusites from Jerusalem ;³ and they rapidly seem to have fallen into a wild, lawless condition. The terrible punishment which their refusal to give up the guilty men of Gibeah brought on them took place evidently in the early days of the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan.

The reasons for assigning an *early* date to this part of the narrative are the following :—In the times spoken of in the twentieth chapter of Judges, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the high-priest, is still alive, and the unanimity of the people marks a very early period. "The congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead,"⁴ that is, from the Danite settlement in the extreme north to the southern tribe of Simeon, within whose border Beersheba lay, with the tribes who had their inheritance on the other side of Jordan. It seems almost the only time when such a gathering took place, and it could not have been very long after the conquest. Although it is the first *civil* war, the first time that Israelite fought

¹ Gen. xlix. 27.³ Judges i. 21.² 1 Chron. viii. 40, xii. 2 ; Judges xx. 16.⁴ Judges xx. 1.

against Israelite, yet the expressions used shew a stronger national feeling than we find afterwards. After the destruction of the Benjamites the sorrow of the people is all directed to the breaking up of the commonwealth of Israel.¹ "They said, There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel." With this story we part with the last of the names familiar to us in the preceding history, Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron. In the determination to "put away evil from Israel" we recognise the leadership of him who "was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel;"² in the strong feeling that the loss of one was a *breach* in the tribes of Israel, we hear again the voice of him who said, "Seeing ye rebel to-day against the Lord, to-morrow He will be wroth with the *whole* congregation of Israel."³

We may perhaps see the consequences of this destruction of the Benjamites in the defenceless condition of the tribe when the invasion of the Moabites took place.⁴ Eglon, king of Moab, at the head of a confederacy of various peoples from the east of the Jordan, crossed the river and established himself in a settlement or camp at "the City of palm trees," on the site of the ruined Jericho. From thence they appear to have overrun and oppressed the neighbouring country, that is the land of Benjamin and the adjoining tribe of Ephraim. The children of Israel seem for a time to have bowed to this oppression, and striven to purchase peace by the payment of a tribute. They were rescued from this state of servitude by the sudden and rapid vengeance taken on Eglon and his Moabites by Ehud.

¹ Judges xxi. 3, 15. ² Numb. xxv. 13. ³ Josh. xxii. 18. ⁴ Judges iii.

Like Othniel, Ehud is called "a deliverer," and he is the first of the heroes of the tribe of Benjamin. The mingled courage and craft with which he achieves the death of Eglon, the rapidity of his movements, the summons from Mount Ephraim (which again seems to intimate the deserted state of the land of Benjamin), the sudden seizing of the fords of the Jordan and cutting off of the flight of the Moabites, all present to us a clear picture of the success of the one "left-handed" Benjamite against the gigantic king and his followers.

And here a question arises which will often occur to us in reading these histories. Could a victory obtained by so much guile and carried out with so much cruelty be a rightful deliverance of God's people? In answering this question we must, as has been said, distinguish clearly between "God's providential government of the world and God's moral law."

It does not at all follow that because Ehud's act brought deliverance to Israel, therefore it was righteous in itself, for God can bring good out of evil, and we must remember that the greatest crime ever recorded, the betrayal of our Blessed Lord, helped to bring about the deliverance of all mankind from the bondage of sin. But if we turn to the moral law alone, and ask "Was Ehud's act in accordance with that?" we must again distinguish between the moral law as he knew it, and the moral law as explained to Christians. We have no right to judge such acts by our own knowledge, but should try them by the amount of knowledge vouchsafed at that time. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy."¹ *That* was Ehud's law, *not* those blessed

¹ Matt. v.

words that follow: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies." He lived in an age when "there was no king in Israel," and "every man did that which was right in his own eyes;" no settled law, but a necessity for self-defence, or, as we should say, taking the law into one's own hands. He shewed perhaps the amount of virtue which it was possible for him to attain to; he was willing to risk his own life for the deliverance of God's Israel, and while he lived he restrained the people from idolatry.¹ For the rest, he would probably no more have thought that the command "Thou shalt not kill" forbade Eglon's death than that it forbade the battle of Beth-horon. If a purer and clearer light has been given to us, let us never forget that greater light is always accompanied by greater responsibility. "To whom men have committed much of him they will ask the more."²

¹ Judges iv. 1.

² Luke xii. 48.

LESSON IV.

THE JUDGES OF THE NORTHERN AND CENTRAL TRIBES.

(I.) *The Northern Tribes.*

FOUR tribes occupied the North of Palestine. Of these NAPHTALI was the most northern, and possessed the forests and high hills bordering on Lebanon. ASHER possessed the sea-coast. ZEBULUN lay south of Naphtali, and together with it surrounded the western shores of the Sea of Galilee, while IS-SACHAR was south again of Zebulun, and appears to have divided with it the possession of the great plain of Jezreel and of the mountain of Tabor. The power of the northern Canaanites had been crushed for a time by Joshua at the battle of Merom; but many towns were left still in their possession, and with reinforcements pouring in, probably from Phœnicia, we can well understand how they gathered strength again. They appear to have rebuilt Hazor, and once more to have been governed by a king who bore the hereditary name of Jabin. While the Moabites oppressed the central part of Palestine, these northern Canaanites probably increased in power and gradually enslaved the northern tribes. A bondage second only to that of

Egypt ensued. Once more "the children of Israel cried unto the Lord ;" once more they were "mightily oppressed." Skilful in arts, the Canaanites again, as in the time of Joshua, were strong in horses and chariots, while they had taken care to disarm those whom they had enslaved.¹ The people dare no longer venture to walk on the highways, nor the judges to do justice in the gates. In this state of low depression, none arose from among the northern tribes to deliver from the oppressors, as Moses from the Egyptians.

One chief indeed, Barak (his name means "lightning") seems to have been already renowned in Naphtali, but even he needed a call to rouse him to the work of patriotism. This call came from the voice of a woman. Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth, belonged to Ephraim, and had her home under a palm tree in Mount Ephraim, but she retained enough of national feeling to perceive that all Israel must unite as in the days of the first march into Canaan, and that their true bond of union was in the leadership of Jehovah.² It is characteristic of the Sacred History, that from time to time we see God's special messages and lessons to the world conveyed through women as well as men. Already we see the working of that truth afterwards proclaimed, that with Him "there is neither male nor female."³ Deborah resembles Miriam, the sister of Aaron and Moses, in her prophetic gifts and high poetic utterances. In her gift of judgment, to receive which the children of Israel came up to her, she reminds us more of Huldah, to whose dwelling in the college the King of Judah in after years sent to inquire. From her sanctuary in Mount Ephraim, Deborah sends

¹ Judges v. 8.

² Judges iv. 6, 7, 14, v. 4.

³ Gal. iii. 28.

for Barak : with all the fervour and power of her nature she urges him to a revolt against the Canaanitish oppression ; she fixes the time and place of the resistance ; urges him to collect his own kindred of Naphtali and Zebulun ; and when he seems to fear and doubt, promises to go with him. With the influence given her by her office of judge and her recognised position as "a mother in Israel," she strove to band together all Israel, and to repeat again the story of the first conquest. But already the national feeling was dying out : it was impossible to rouse those, who were at any distance from the pressure of the danger, to resist it. "Gilead (that is, Gad and half Manasseh) abode beyond Jordan ;" Reuben apparently debated the matter, but, ever "unstable as water," weakly remained among his sheepfolds ; Dan remained in his ships ; and Asher, though situated in the north, "continued on the sea-shore ;" probably because already in alliance with the invaders. "The Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites,"¹ and no judge or mighty man ever sprung from them. Even among those tribes who rose, one town was conspicuous for its refusal to come, as the prophetess indignantly expresses it, "to the help of the Lord against the mighty."²

If unsuccessful in animating the whole, Deborah however inspired a great part of the country to rise in the national defence.

To those gallant ten thousand of Naphtali and Zebulun, whose praise she afterwards celebrated, the prophetess added "a root out of Ephraim," certain governors and princes from western Manasseh and Issachar, and even some helpers from the small though

¹ Judges i. 32.

² Judges v. 23.

ever warlike tribe of Benjamin. All assembled on Mount Tabor, and thence "on foot" rushed down upon the Canaanitish host, which, strong in its position near the towns of Megiddo and Taanach (from which their countrymen had never been dislodged),¹ awaited them with nine hundred chariots of iron in the plain of Jezreel.

The combat seemed most unequal, but it was the Lord Who fought for "the avenging of Israel," and the issue was not long uncertain. A storm arose apparently during the battle; the rising of the river Kishon, swelled by rain, rendered useless the heavy iron chariots, and soon all became confusion in the oppressor's army. Sisera himself fled away on foot, leaving his people to utter destruction before the sword of Barak. He fled, but his mighty and long oppression was not to go unpunished. The terrible story of his end is known to all of us, his last hope of finding refuge among the wandering Kenites, and his death by the hand of a woman. These Kenites were descendants of Moses' brother-in-law Hobab,² to whom Moses had extended the privileges of the Lord's people. They probably considered themselves as part of the chosen people, though they had not given up their wandering habits or their tent life. A branch of them, with Heber and Jael at their head, had journeyed to the north of Naphtali. There they found a heavy oppression weighing on their Israelitish brethren, and then Jael with her own hand destroyed the oppressor. Heber had indeed made peace with the Canaanite, and some of his tribe seem

¹ Judges i. 27.

² Numb. x. 29-32; Judges i. 16, v. 6, iv. 11. The word translated in our Bible "father-in-law" signifies really any relation by marriage.

to have betrayed the movements of Deborah and Barak ; but it is clear from Jael's address to Barak that she already knew him well as the Israelitish chief, and that her allegiance to the God of Israel had never been shaken. Barak's faith had been tried by the apparent insufficiency of the means at his command, and by Deborah's assurance that the honour of the day would not be his ; but it was not for his own honour that he had striven, and though brought about by a woman, he could "rejoice when he saw the vengeance." Of Jael's deed we must judge (as of Ehud's) by the light of such knowledge as she, one of the wandering "women of the tent," possessed. A great thinker of modern times has said : "The spirit of the commendation of Jael is that God allows largely for ignorance where He finds sincerity ; that they who serve Him honestly up to the measure of their knowledge are, according to the general course of His Providence, encouraged and blessed ; that they whose eyes and hearts are still fixed on duty, and not on self, are plainly that smoking flax which He will not quench, but cherish rather until it be blown into a flame."

(2.) The Central Tribes.

The centre of Palestine was occupied by the house of Joseph. Bordering on Benjamin northward, the great tribe of EPHRAIM had claimed, and claimed with reason, the whole centre of the land. Within their border lay Shiloh (the place where God had put His name), Shechem, where were buried the bones of Joseph, the ancestor of the tribe, and Timnath-Serah,

where lay their great hero Joshua. Northward again was half the brother tribe of MANASSEH, in whose possession was the pass opening into the plain of Jezreel from the east. Here Joseph inherited the blessings of his father, "unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills,"¹ and here in close neighbourhood dwelt "the ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh."² Ephraim might well have been the centre and rallying-point for all the tribes of Israel; but mighty and powerful as it was, it never strove to occupy such a position. From the first, it is clear that Shiloh, the centre of worship, was not the centre or capital of the tribe; Shechem instead was their great and favourite city, from which, however, they did not apparently utterly dislodge the Canaanites. "Mingled among the heathen, they learned their works, and they served their idols, which were a snare unto them."³ Early in their history the Ephraimites are said to have "turned themselves back in the day of battle;"⁴ it was but "a root" of them that followed their own prophetess Deborah, and from that time we constantly find them jealous of others and complaining of their opportunities for distinguishing themselves as a tribe, rather than striving for the unity of the nation, or rejoicing in the success of all. The time when they might have headed this national feeling at length passed away; "the Lord refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe Ephraim," and their after history is singularly connected with the schisms of their country both in Church and State. From the later books of the Bible we know that it was they who led the revolt against the house of

¹ Gen. xlix. 26.

² Deut. xxxiii. 17.

³ Psa. cvi. 35

⁴ Psa. lxxviii. 9.

David, and who for the most part composed the rival kingdom of Israel ; it was in their land that the rival worship of the Samaritans was established, and continues even to this day.

In MANASSEH idolatry had as great or even greater hold upon the people. The father of their great judge and hero, Gideon, had raised an altar to Baal and a figure of Ashtoreth,¹ two false gods of the Canaanites. On the backsliding Israelites came a heavy judgment from God. The Midianites, with other desert tribes, came up periodically from the other side of Jordan and overspread the whole centre of the land. It was a yearly visitation, and as at the present day in Palestine the fear of the wandering Bedouins makes much cultivation of the country useless, so then the crops which Israel had sown were all swept off by the invaders. At length this servitude was resisted, and a deliverer raised up from the families of Manasseh. Gideon's faith is very striking. At the risk of his own life he overthrows the altar of Baal, and like Elijah offers a burnt-offering, while his father exclaims, "Will ye plead for Baal? . . . if he be a god, let him plead for himself." Like Moses, Gideon trembles at the great task given him: "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?" But though he asks for signs, it is not as a proof of God's power, but to assure himself that God *has* spoken, and that he is not being led by his own imagination.² When next the dreaded yearly invasion takes place Gideon prepares to resist ; he who before thought only of hiding the corn in the wine-press now summons the people together. As is said of all the

¹ Such seems the best explanation of the word translated "grove" in Judges vi. 25.

² Judges vi. 36.

judges, "the Spirit of the Lord" came upon him, and the people who had been hiding in dens and caves, and long without a leader, are gathered to him. First the men of his own city, then all of his own tribe, come at the sound of his trumpet; they are joined by the most northern tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, ready, as before under Barak, to put their lives in jeopardy; and even by Asher, stung perhaps by the reproaches of Deborah, or moved by the destructive nature of the invasion. In the history which follows we have the same lesson taught as in the first taking of Jericho under Joshua. Every precaution is taken to teach the people that it is not in their own strength that they conquer; their number is diminished till it seems out of all proportion to those opposed to them, and, as before, it is by the sound of the trumpets and the shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" that the victory is won. Anxious to render it complete, Gideon sends to the Ephraimites to repeat the stratagem of Ehud with the Moabites, and seize the fords of Jordan, and so prevent the escape of the invaders. This is done; but the jealousy of the great tribe breaks out in their anger with Gideon even at such a moment. In his answer we see a remarkable example of forbearance and gentleness: he would not suffer this great day of the Lord to be marred by strife and recrimination. He continues his track of the Midianites on the other side of Jordan, "faint, yet pursuing,"—words which, describing mingled exhaustion and determination, have seemed to many an apt description of a Christian's warfare. At length the remainder of the great host is overtaken, final victory is gained, and Zebah and Zalmunna, the head chiefs, perish, as their inferior princes Oreb

and Zeeb had done before. The success was complete; we hear no more of Midianite invasions: "they lifted up their heads no more."¹ The triumph of that day was long associated with the northern victory of Barak:

"Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison:

Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna."²

The immediate result of Gideon's great deliverance was, that the men he had led to victory desired him to be their king. They were falling more and more away from the perfect pattern set before them of a kingdom ruled only by God; they raised no song like Deborah to praise Jehovah for the avenging of Israel, but, weary of discords among themselves and of constant invasions of a foreign foe, they said to Gideon, "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also." They asked, in short, for an hereditary monarchy. It was the first cry of that desire to be like the nations around, which afterwards became too strong for Samuel to resist. But Gideon's true faith rose above such a desire, even though made in a form so flattering to his pride. His answer is one of the last protests against it, one of the last endeavours to realize the kingdom as it should have been. "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you." Thus nobly did the deliverer refuse the unworthy proffer which his son Abimelech afterwards sought for, or, to use the figurative language of the first Hebrew parable, thus did the olive-tree, the fig, and the vine decline that which the worthless bramble accepted.³ It

¹ Judges viii. 28.

² Psa. lxxxiii. 9, 11.

³ Judges ix. 8-15.

is sad to remember that the history of Gideon does not end here. Jealous perhaps of Shiloh and of Ephraim, he seems to have established an unauthorized and rival worship at Ophrah; there he lived with something of the state of a king, though he would not hold the office. He is the first great instance of one who indulged in excessive polygamy; and in the massacre of his sons, related in the ninth chapter of Judges, we see the bitter result which then, as has so often since, followed upon it. But if Gideon failed in these matters, he yet stands high among those who judged Israel. Nowhere can we find among them a more courageous and prompt following of God's command, a more prudent avoidance of strife, or a more noble faith in the government of Jehovah. Great in all these things, he is worthy to stand first in the list of those of whom the Apostle says that the time would fail him to tell of their faith, who "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."¹

¹ Heb. xi. 32, 34.

LESSON V.

THE JUDGES OF THE TRIBES EAST OF JORDAN AND ON THE WESTERN COAST.

(I.) *The Trans-Jordanic Tribes.*

THE two tribes of REUBEN and GAD, and half the tribe of MANASSEH, received their portion east of the Jordan; their country was more beautiful and more fertile than the western districts, and so well adapted to pastoral pursuits, that the oaks and the bulls of Bashan (the northern portion of their territory) became proverbial. The most southern of these tribes was Reuben, whose history, like that of Simeon, is almost a blank. Gad, the central tribe, was far more energetic and warlike; to them belonged the land of Gilead proper, though the name "Gilead" is often applied in a wider sense, sometimes as comprehending the whole Israelitish land east of the Jordan. Within the border of Gad lay Ramoth in Gilead, a Levitical city and a city of refuge, which seems to have been built on the spot where Jacob parted from Laban. They possessed also Jabesh-Gilead, renowned as being the one town which, in the early days of the judges, came not to join the confederate tribes against Benjamin. Between this town and Benjamin we can from that time trace a constant

connexion. To the north of Gad lay the half tribe of Manasseh, which possessed the rich land of Bashan, and was the most warlike of all the eastern tribes. The victories of Moses on this side of Jordan were gained over the Amorites, who themselves were Canaanites who had crossed from the west of Jordan and conquered the lands nearest to the river from the Moabites and Ammonites.

The Canaanitish tribes were subdued by Israel; but the two kindred nations of Moab and Ammon, the original possessors of the land, lay yet unconquered around them. These two peoples can hardly be distinguished in the history from each other; both were children of Lot, both were allied together, and they were alike detested by the children of Israel. They dared not to impede the victorious march of the Israelites under Moses, but they strove, through their magic enchantments and the prophetic voice of Balaam, to work them injury. In this they failed, but they never forgot that the land possessed by Israel had once been theirs, and though unable themselves to thrust out the Amorites, they lay in wait for the time when they might in turn conquer the conquerors. We have seen how the Moabite king Eglon invaded the west of Palestine, which must have been preceded by an overrunning of the eastern part; later in the history, a still more complete servitude succeeded, and for eighteen years all the children of Israel east of Jordan were oppressed by the Ammonites.¹ The history once more seems to repeat itself: "When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and enquired early after God."² A great change took

¹ Judges x. 8, 9.

² Psa. lxxviii. 34.

place; they put away the false gods of the nations round, which they had begun to worship, and turned themselves again to Jehovah. An answer came to them, how given we are not told, but it was not given in their favour: "Ye have forsaken Me, and served other gods; go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen."¹ When first they returned to their homes they had raised an altar of witness, that their brethren might not cast them off from the commonwealth of Israel, or say, "What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel?"² But those days had passed; the influence of the wild heathen tribes around them had been too strong for them, and they had accepted their superstitions, striving probably to mingle them with the true worship. Of national unity there was none; Gilead had not joined his brethren in their great fight under Barak, and could not hope in turn to be rescued by them. A great meeting of the people was held at Mizpeh (or the watch-tower), which is probably the same as Ramoth-Gilead;³ and there, without any thought of their western brethren, the headship over "all the inhabitants of Gilead" was offered to him who should even "*begin* to fight" against their enemies.⁴

In their low estate and distress the elders of Gilead bethought them of one, outlawed from among them, who was apparently leading the life of a freebooter or leader of robbers, but who was known as "a mighty man of valour." To him they went, and prayed him to take the leadership of Gilead. Less noble than Gideon, Jephthah made this honour a condition of his aid; yet from the first the wild outlaw accepted the position as one

¹ Judges x. 13, 14.

² Josh. xxii. 23, 24.

³ Compare Gen. xxxi. 49; Josh. x. 26.

⁴ Judges x. 18.

from the Lord. If "the Lord deliver them before me," is his language, and his first act is to utter "all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh;"¹ this last sentence implying some special ceremony by which he devoted himself to the work. His first effort was an attempt at mediation. In his message to the King of the Children of Ammon, we may notice his accurate knowledge of all the events of the first conquest; and in the fact that the words he used are almost literal quotations from the Book of Deuteronomy, we may perhaps learn that these isolated eastern tribes had up to this time preserved, not only some remembrance of the deeds, but copies of the very writings of the great Lawgiver. The message was useless, and Jephthah at once prepared for war. At length he had an assurance of God's favour. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah."² Henceforth he is not merely "a mighty man of valour," but a divinely-appointed judge and leader under God. Rapidly traversing the country, he assembled together the people of Gilead and Bashan; he even strove by a message to bring to his aid the men of his brother tribe of Ephraim.³ It was in vain; he received no help. Supported only by the eastern tribes, Jephthah, to use his own strong expression, "put his life in his hands," and marched against the Ammonites. The result of this act of faith was a complete victory, and to the Lord alone Jephthah ascribed it: "The Lord delivered them into my hand."⁴ As in the wars of Gideon, so now the jealous Ephraimites chided with Jephthah after the victory, declaring that they had never been summoned, and

¹ Judges xi. 9-11.³ Judges xii. 2.² Judges xi. 29.⁴ Judges xii. 3.

threatened to burn him and his house with fire. But "the warrior Gileadite" did not imitate the gentleness of Gideon; his angry reply was followed by a battle, the first in which one tribe of Israel fought with another, moved only by strife and emulation. The sad result was the destruction of a large part of the tribe of Ephraim; and thus through anger, taunting words and battle, the union of Israel was more than ever broken. For six years Jephthah continued to judge, and then died, and was buried in his own land of Gilead.

One other circumstance is known to us, one which must have rendered those six years years of sorrow. His terrible vow is a proof to us of how thoroughly he had become imbued with the feelings of the heathen; "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"¹ This was the gloomy thought that characterized the Moabites, and they answered the question with a terrible assent. In their after wars against Israel, the offering of his eldest son was the last despairing effort of their king.² Jephthah's sin consisted rather in his having "mingled with the heathen and learned their works," than in the actual vow which he had come to believe to be pleasing to God. It has been very well remarked: "Jephthah was right in not being deterred from keeping his vow by the loss and sorrow to himself, just as Abraham was right in not withholding his son, his only son, from God, when commanded to offer him up as a burnt-offering. But Jephthah was wholly wrong in that conception of the character of God which led to his making the rash vow. Had he discovered his fatal

¹ Micah vi. 7.² 2 Kings iii. 27.

error, he would have done right not to slay his child, though the guilt of making and of breaking such a vow would have remained." For the noble maiden we can but feel mingled pity and admiration. We should notice, too, the only cause for which she mourned, and which evidently in the eyes of her historian enhanced the pitifulness of her fate.¹ To be a wife and a mother was the highest desire of every Israelitish woman; may we not trace in that desire an echo of Eve's feeling when she exclaimed, "I have gotten a man from the Lord,"² a remembrance of the promise that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head?

(2.) *The Tribes on the Western Coast of Palestine.*

Dan, the last of the tribes to receive an inheritance, had the territory lying between Judah and Ephraim and the sea allotted to him. The portion was too small for so large a tribe, and they sent forth a colony to the extreme North of Palestine.³ Narrow as was their original settlement, the Philistines disputed it with them. From the first the Philistines succeeded in retaining possession of the sea-coast, and in preserving there the worship of Dagon, or the Fish-god, whose figure was represented as half fish, half man. They drove the Danites into the barren hills and cliffs,⁴ and kept for themselves the cornfields and vineyards of the plain. Shamgar, with his ox-goad, and perhaps Jael, had indeed made a struggle against them, but to no purpose.⁵ For forty years the Lord delivered the Israelites into the hand of the Philistines.⁶ Yet it was

¹ Judges xi. 37, 39.

² Gen. iv. 1.

³ Judges xviii. 1, 2, 27, 28.

⁴ Judges i. 34.

⁵ Judges iii. 31, v. 6.

⁶ Judges xiii. 1.

not impossible for mixed marriages to be made between Israelites and Philistines, for feasts to be held at which both people met, and the men of Judah evidently resented the interruption of this inglorious but quiet state of things.¹ This interruption came through the deeds of one of the last of the judges, the great Danite hero, Samson. In his wondrous birth we are reminded of the birth of Isaac, from whom the whole nation had sprung; in his Nazarite mode of life, drinking no strong drink or liquor of grapes, and wearing his hair uncut,² he was *separate* unto the Lord, and that not for a time but throughout his life, type of the people who should have been *separate* from the heathen; in his marvellous acts performed with such apparently simple means, with his own hands and arms or with the jawbone of an ass, he seems to repeat again the lesson of the fall of Jericho, or the destruction of the Midianites at the sound of trumpets and of shoutings. And Samson seems to have been conscious of this. His faith consists in this, that he ever remembered that it was the Spirit of the Lord that moved him, and the power of God that was manifested in his acts. While he came down from the heights of Zorah or the camp of Dan (Mahaneh Dan), and wandered among the vineyards of Timnath, while he shouted and sang of the heaps that he had slain, or revelled in the strength which could not only carry away the gates of Gaza, but, as if in jest, take them to the top of a hill, he constantly remembered Whose strength he was shewing forth. His brethren of Judah, caring not to follow a Danite leader, may betray him, but he will not fall or avenge himself upon them.

¹ Judges xiv. 2, 5, 10, xv. 11. ² Judges xiii. 3, 5, 7; Numb. vi. 2, 3, 5.

"Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of Thy servant" are his words when "sore athirst," and at the last his trust and hope are in Jehovah. "O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God." "*Only this once!*" The words are full of tragic meaning when we remember all that they convey, for it was the last time that the prayer could ever be prayed or the marvellous gift ever granted. For Samson had not only been a type of Israel as aided and gifted by God, but of the backsliding of Israel also. Though directed by the Lord for the working out of His purpose, Samson's desire to marry a Philistine woman is the national crime of "mingling with the heathen" over again; in his uncontrolled passions and evil loves he is like that nation who, forgetting the kindness of her youth, said, "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go."¹ Thus, too, the many servitudes and cries unto the Lord of Israel are re-echoed by the mighty Danite in the last scenes of his life.

"Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke."

How like is one description to the other:—

"Thou feedest them with the bread of tears;
And givest them tears to drink in great measure,
Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours;
And our enemies laugh among themselves."²

And if we would give the story a wider application, we have but to see in Samson's marvellous strength an image of all power, mental or physical, and to remember that the same sins of self-will and unrestrained

¹ Jer. ii. 2, 25.

² Psa. lxxx. 5, 6.

desire always at length render such powers useless, or worse than useless.

“Samson’s gifts of bodily strength, which were the consequence in him of the Spirit of God exalting the ordinary powers of man’s muscles and sinews into the heroic might of the Nazarite deliverer, are a type of the quickening of the higher gifts of intellectual power by the informing Spirit into a grander reach of exertions than the merely natural mind could have attained. The employment of these at the mere bidding of the selfish will, for sport, for gain, for the gratification of a vain daring, for the pleasure of unbridled speculation, is the fulfilment in a higher sphere of the casting away of the sensual, wayward judge of the tribe of Dan.”¹

¹ *Heroes of Hebrew History*, by the late Bishop of Winchester.

LESSON VI.

SAMUEL AND THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS.

WHILE the Philistines were oppressing the coasts of Dan and Judah, the one man who seems to have resisted them was the judge over Central Palestine, the high-priest Eli. It might have been thought that from this first union of the judicial and priestly functions would spring a renewed national life. Now at last Shiloh was the centre both of civil and religious government. But in point of fact no time was so dark, no state so degraded as this. The institution of an order of priests and Levites, separated by God from the rest of their nation, was intended to teach the Israelites the need of their separation from all other nations. To the priests and Levites pertained the offering of sacrifices, the care of the Tabernacle and sacred vessels, and to the office of high-priest belonged the special power of inquiring of God through the mysterious Urim and Thummim. The Levites, dispersed in different cities all over the land, were specially enjoined to teach Israel the statutes of God.¹ But holy things perverted to bad uses are most powerful for evil: "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" The account given us of the wandering Levite who

¹ Lev. x. 11; Deut. xxxiii. 10.

joined the Danites, and established for them an irregular worship, shews too plainly what the separated tribe might become,¹ while the history of Eli and his sons rendered vain the hope of union for Israel under priestly rule. Greedy, rapacious, dishonest and sensual, Hophni and Phinehas brought the ordained worship of God into utter disrepute. "Men abhorred the offering of the Lord." Though Eli did not share his sons' wickedness, yet his story is a continued warning against that lax feeling which would make us believe that we can cleave to that which is good without abhorring that which is evil. "His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

National disunion was now increased by an aversion to the national worship. It would appear that people strove to "inquire of God" in other places and manners than those appointed. Soon after this time the power of inquiring by Urim and Thummim seems to have departed from the high-priests.² Its place was filled by another office, which first now begins to appear in the history, that of the Prophets. Israel had lost the trust in God as their King, and so needed an earthly king; they had ceased to approach near to God through His ordained priesthood, and so needed the new order of teachers which was mercifully sent to them. The corruptions of Shiloh, however, were not suffered to continue. The Philistines marched into the centre of the land. The Israelites met with defeat and disaster. The two evil priests, making a wrong use of the office given them, profaned the ark by dragging it into battle, to act

¹ Judges xviii.

² The power lingered probably till towards the close of David's reign (2 Sam. xxi. 1), and Abiathar seems to have been the last high-priest who exercised it.

as a charm against their enemies. The overthrow was complete. Up the ascent through the town of Shiloh the news was brought; the cry raised in the city told the aged priest of disaster as he sat watching; then followed the terrible news, blow on blow descending on him, till at the last, "the ark of God is taken!" he sunk down to rise no more. His death was followed by that of his daughter-in-law. Truly might it be said—

"Their priests were slain by the sword;
And there were no widows to make lamentation."¹

In this darkest period of Jewish history, there is, as ever with God's Church, some light; and here the light streams from the story of an innocent child and his mother. In Hannah's prophetic psalm of praise we are reminded of Miriam and Deborah, and far more of one "blessed among women,"² who was to be the mother of a yet greater Son. The words go far beyond the joy of "the barren woman" who had become "a joyful mother of children," far beyond the triumph of Hannah over Peninnah, and speak of a confounding of the great and mighty things of this world by the weak, a revelation given to babes, which was only realized in the Church of Christ. Nay, the very word *Christ*, or *Messiah*, the Anointed One, is first used by Hannah;³ and her words are re-echoed in those familiar phrases—"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek." The holiness and innocence of the child Samuel is constantly brought before us, as he ministered unto the Lord before Eli the priest, a Nazarite with uncut hair like Samson, wearing a linen ephod, opening the doors

¹ Psa. lxxviii. 64.

² Luke i. 28, 42.

³ 1 Sam. ii. 10.

of the house of the Lord. "The child was young," "he ministered before the Lord, being a child," "he grew before the Lord." These thoughts are at length expressed in words almost identical with those used of a Holier Child—"He was in favour both with the Lord and also with men." At the close of a long life, Samuel was able to point back to this holy childhood, and to affirm that his whole course had been consistent with it. "I have walked," he said, "before you from my childhood unto this day." If we are ever tempted to exalt unduly the zeal and warmth of love which often follow a sudden conversion, if we are ever led to dream that a youth misspent and an early life of carelessness may be redeemed, if it shall please God later on to touch the heart, let us remember that this special blessedness of a growing holiness, commenced in childhood, and gradually developing and increasing, can never belong to those who have to mourn

"For lavish'd hours and love misspent."

The prodigal may return to his father, but it is not to him that the words are spoken: "Son, thou art *ever with me*, and all that I have is thine."

Through the innocent lips of the child, God's terrible message was conveyed to Eli; the fame of it spread, and from his early years "all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." For twenty years after the death of Eli he seems to have lived in seclusion, while the Philistines oppressed the country. At the end of that time he appears as a deliverer with that suddenness which we generally mark in the raising up of one of the judges.¹ He strives at

¹ 1 Sam. vii. 3.

once for union. "Gather *all* Israel to Mizpeh" are his words, and there, with prayer and fasting, he renews the covenant between God and the people. They are still engaged in prayer and sacrifice when the enemy draws near. The cries to God are mingled with the clash of weapons, but the answer to the prayer is granted at once. "The Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, . . . and they were smitten before Israel." A period of rest and peace followed, during which Samuel judged Israel. To preserve the national unity he seems to have endeavoured to extend his jurisdiction over the whole land ; he himself went in regular circuits through the central region, while he sent his sons to judge at Beersheba in the extreme south. But he could not succeed wholly. His sons, partaking of the corruption of the time, "walked not in his ways," and, partly from the hopelessness of obtaining uniform justice throughout the land, partly from the need felt for a settled leader, who should lead not one or two tribes but all Israel to battle, the people united in asking for a king. We have no right to ascribe to Samuel any undue clinging to old institutions when the time had come for newer ones ; still less have we any right to accuse him of jealousy over his own rights as judge and ruler. The one cause why this demand was the great sorrow of his life was, that it was the confession that Israel could no longer hope to fill up the ideal set before them ; that through their own unworthiness they had rendered for ever impossible that kingdom which might have been theirs. "The Lord your God was your King" are his mournful, indignant words. And God's words to him were more than a consolation for loss of power or wounded vanity.

"Hearken unto the voice of the people, . . . for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." The rejection was not so much in this present request for a king, but in that which had rendered the request needful—the constant mingling with the heathen, the deadness of their worship of the true God, which had so broken up the tribes as to destroy the commonwealth of Israel. The old state of things having become impossible, Samuel was now to hearken to the proposal for a new. He could not thus see the first glories of his nation swept away without regret; but the generosity of his nature is shewn in the heart and hope with which he strives to inspire the people for the altered state of things, in his constant prayers, and in the earnestness and love with which he seeks to aid the new king.

The direct rule of God was thus superseded by that of an earthly king; so also the direct messages of God given by Urim and Thummim to the high-priest were gradually superseded by messages delivered through the consciousness and by the voice of living men. We have met with many instances of the prophetic gift being granted before this time; Moses, Miriam, Deborah, and Hannah all prophesied. We read, too, of instances of prophets, whose names are not recorded, who were charged with God's messages during the time of the Judges.¹ But, until the time of Samuel, there was no distinct order of the prophets. In using the word 'Prophet,' let us remember that it does not only mean 'predicter,' or one who foretells events. Doubtless the prophets were often predictors, but their real office was a higher one than this. They were the

¹ Judges vi. 8; 1 Sam. ii. 27.

messengers of God, the watchmen to the house of Israel, sent to declare His will to His people. They were therefore quite as much *preachers* as predictors. They had a direct gift from God: "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."¹ But this gift did not supersede altogether their own individuality, still less did it control their will. It could be misused like other gifts. Hence the constant mention of false prophets and false prophetesses, and that fatal perversion of it which came from the mouth of a high-priest.² It could, like other gifts, be improved and strengthened; hence the founding by Samuel of those establishments called "Schools of the Prophets." In these colleges Samuel gathered together the promising students of his time, to train them for the prophetic order. There might be men like Amos on whom the gift of prophecy came without training,³ but as a rule it came to those trained and prepared for it. These lived together in the colleges of Ramah, Bethel, Jericho, or Gilgal, presided over by a leading prophet, and having their meals in common. Their numbers were sometimes very many, as when Obadiah hid a hundred at a time from Jezebel.⁴

The prophetic utterances were generally poetical. Not only the Psalms, but great portions of the books of the prophets, are strictly poetry. This poetical prophecy was often accompanied and apparently aided by music.⁵ They also, however, taught by prose writings and speeches, among which must be classed such histories as we have in Isaiah and Daniel, other histories now lost, such as "the book of Nathan

¹ 2 Pet. i. 21.

² John xi. 50, 51.

³ Amos vii. 14.

⁴ 1 Sam. xix. 19, 20; 2 Kings ii. 3, 5, iv. 38; 1 Kings xviii. 4.

⁵ 1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Kings iii. 15.

the prophet, and the book of Gad the seer,"¹ and spoken parables and apologues, which, in later days, were so much used by the greatest of the Prophets, our Blessed Lord. For all these things the "companies" or schools founded by Samuel afforded training, but for all of them the Spirit of the Lord was needed as much as before by Othniel, Jephthah, or Samson. That the distinct office of the prophets should arise at the same time as that of the kings, indicates at once the great part the prophets were to play as advisers of both kings and people. It was in fact a new administration of the Spirit poured out, not (as in Christian times) on all God's people, but on individual men for special purposes. His power alone enabled single men to stand against numbers as Elijah did, to warn great kings as Nathan, or to cheer and strengthen a captive people as Ezekiel and Daniel. But something like this power given to individuals had been seen before. What was new in this administration was, that the gift should animate a whole body of men; that it should be a gift capable of increase and received by one from another; an enthusiasm which, spreading among them, witnessed that God was indeed with them. This gift, as has been said, "abounds when sought by all as one, and by each as a part of the whole, but dies out in separation, and languishes in each as it ebbs from the common body."² First perceived in these days of Samuel, this sense of one Spirit animating one Body was not fully realized till the great day of Pentecost, but from that time it has been possessed by the Spirit-bearing Church.

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 29. Jeremiah also is thought by some, not without reason, to have compiled 1 and 2 Kings.

² *Heroes of Hebrew History.*

LESSON VII.

THE REIGN OF SAUL.

THE establishment of a monarchy in Israel was begun under cheering circumstances. Although it seemed to supersede the more immediate and holier form of government by God, yet it was capable of equal or even greater blessedness.¹ "The Lord will not forsake His people," was the Prophet's announcement after the new order of things had commenced. And the first king appeared to be one well adapted for the high office. Tall, strong and beautiful, Saul's noble outward form was not the greatest of his gifts; with the energy and courage that always distinguished a Benjamite, he joined a gracious modesty and a rare generosity. In those early days he was "little in his own sight;"² in the heat of his first victory he forbade that any man should be put to death that day in revenge for their treatment of him.³ To those great natural qualities there were added special gifts from God; he was chosen expressly by God and not by man, and he knew it; both privately and publicly he had been named "the Lord's Anointed." The title is frequently applied to him, and was in its nature a first indication of the

¹ 1 Sam. xii. 22.

² 1 Sam. xv. 17.

³ 1 Sam. xi. 13.

true kingly office of Christ, the Messiah or Anointed One. The holiest and greatest man of his time gave to Saul his love, his counsel, and his prayers;¹ and above all he had a direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit of God.² Not only did the Spirit of God come upon him before a battle, as on the Judges in earlier times, but that newer manifestation of it which characterized his own times, was vouchsafed to him. Falling in with the company of the prophets, he too prophesied, filled with the one Spirit that filled them; till others, moved by the wondrous sight, exclaimed, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"³ Thus, in his glorious youth, he seemed marked out to accomplish God's purposes. He was the "chosen of the Lord," and was remembered as such even after his death.⁴

Let us learn to reflect when we use the word "election" that it does not necessarily imply final perseverance. Saul was clearly *elected* in the fullest sense of the word. "Thou shalt be turned into another man,"⁵ is the promise to him, and the promise was fully kept. "God gave him another heart." And yet he fell from God. And the explanation is that he was wilful, and God did not constrain his will. "Almighty God," it has been said, "chose an instrument adapted, as far as external qualifications were concerned, to fulfil His purpose; adapted in character and gifts, in all respects except in that in which all men are on the whole on a level,—in will." And the same writer says, "The world prevailed over the faith of Balaam; a more subtle, though not a rare temptation, overcame the faith of Saul: wilfulness, the

¹ 1 Sam. x. 8, xv. 11, 35, xvi. 1.

³ 1 Sam. x. 11.

⁴ 2 Sam. xxi. 6.

² 1 Sam. xi. 6.

⁵ 1 Sam. x. 6, 9.

unaccountable desire of acting short of simple obedience to God's will, a repugnance of unreserved self-surrender and submission to Him."¹

At first however all was glory and success. The hopes of the nation seemed accomplished. The wild Ammonites, recovering from their defeat by Jephthah, strive once more to possess themselves of Gilead. Jabesh-Gilead, the town attacked, sends a despairing message to its old allies the Benjamites. The result is indeed different from that which followed Jephthah's message to Ephraim. A fresh vigour and union mark the commencement of the monarchy. Throughout "*all the coasts of Israel*" Saul sends his summons, and Israel and Judah assemble to follow him, three hundred and thirty thousand men.² The victory that followed served to confirm and renew the king's rule. But the work of delivering Israel was not complete. This victory rescued the land east of Jordan, but the western foes, the Philistines, still had garrisons through the land. An attack on one of these by Saul's son Jonathan led to a new Philistine invasion. The terror felt by the unarmed Israelites seemed to render their cause hopeless.³ Distress, trembling and desertion followed Saul's efforts to organize a defence. And now for the first time the wilfulness and want of faith which brought Saul to ruin appeared. He knew that Samuel's voice was the voice of God to him, and knowing it he disobeyed it. When he offered the burnt-offering at Gilgal, he allowed his faith in God's will as declared by His Prophet to sink before considerations of worldly prudence. Now, as again later, he shewed

¹ NEWMAN'S *Oxford University Sermons*.

² 1 Sam. xi. 7, 8.

³ 1 Sam. xiii. 22.

that he had not learnt the lesson, "to obey is better than sacrifice." We should notice two things here: first, that Saul's wilfulness was useless—the people still melted away from him;¹ second, that Samuel's rebuke, "Thou hast done foolishly, . . . thy kingdom shall not continue," by no means left Saul without the hope of yet redeeming his reign. Had Saul repented then, had he shewn any of that sorrowing contrition for sin, mingled with resolution for the future, that so distinguished his successor, all might yet have been well with him.

Years passed on, years of great prosperity and success to Saul; the hopes of the people were accomplished; all Israel was united, and, fighting under one leader, conquered their enemies, not here and there, but on every side.² The reign of the king was firmly established; his court imitated the magnificence of other kingdoms around. But a second trial came at length; the war with Amalek was to be a war of extermination, like the first war of Israel with the Canaanites.³ The command to Saul was as plain as that to Joshua. But Saul followed the example of Achan rather than that of Joshua, and once more wilfully disobeyed. It seemed to him a pity to destroy what was good, and he probably desired a grand ceremonial and splendid sacrifice at the conclusion of the war.⁴ Again the lower motives, the wilful desire, were substituted for the higher duty of obedience. Samuel yearns over him still with love, strives in prayer for him, and seems to long yet to serve this chosen one of the Lord. But the miserable excuses, the utter breakdown of all truth

¹ 1 Sam. xiii. 15, 16.

² 1 Sam. xiv. 47.

³ 1 Sam. xv. 3.

⁴ 1 Sam. xv. 21.

and honesty, the mean equivocations that follow, awake his scorn and righteous anger. Far louder now peals the voice of judgment. "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king;" and, as if pointing to the falseness of Saul's answers, "Also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man that He should repent." "To obey is better than sacrifice." The words were truly applicable to Saul, who twice, for the sake of doing sacrifice, had disobeyed; and his rebellion is compared with witchcraft, a sin against which Saul had been specially zealous.¹ And that his disobedience was due to no feelings of humanity, or his zeal directed to keeping his word, is shewn by his conduct to the Gibeonites. Joshua had sworn to them, and he and the elders had kept the oath: it was Saul who first broke it, and was zealous, not for truth, but for conquest.² No longer visited and counselled by God's prophet, the days of Saul began to darken. His armies were still victorious, but he is no longer the man he once was. The change is awfully described in the one verse, "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." No longer gifted with prophetic utterances, his mind is troubled, and reason at last totters on her throne. The moral fall has brought with it an intellectual fall. Yet, still in his changed condition, Saul inspires love: his servants are anxious for his good, the absent prophet mourns for him; the noble son, companion of his victories, clings to him to the last, and hardly will believe evil of him;³ while one bright form, in youthful freshness and

¹ 1 Sam. xxviii. 3.² 2 Sam. xxi. 1, 2.³ 1 Sam. xvi. 15, 16, xxviii. 23, xv. 35, xx. 2, xvi. 21, 23.

loveliness, stands by him, and strives with music to soothe his weary spirit.

It was in vain. To his other sins is added now a dark jealousy which leads him to plunge deeper into crime. How terribly significant is the miserable fear which haunts the godless man in the presence of the young servant of God.¹ "Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him." The fear and the jealousy grow into hatred; the hatred leads to repeated attempts at murder, and at last to a massacre.² Yet gleams of the old light still break through the heavy darkness; but they become rarer as each one is misused. There were times when, during his long pursuit and cruel hunting of his best friend, Saul might yet have recovered something of his former position. Once, when in the very act of pursuit, a return again of the old prophetic fervour came to him, once more within the influence of "the goodly fellowship of the prophets" he too became as one of them, once more men asked wonderingly, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"³ How changed is the anointed of the Lord from those bright days when first the words were uttered! The moment of inspiration passed, and no repentance followed. Soon after this time he narrowly escaped being the murderer of his own son.⁴ Yet some consciousness of his fallen condition remained; he weeps yet⁵ at the well-remembered voice of him who calls him still "My father." "I have played the fool, I have erred exceedingly," is his mournful confession.

But the end was drawing near. The aged Prophet Samuel was dead, and "all Israel," reunited through

¹ 1 Sam. xviii. 12, 15, 29.

² 1 Sam. xxii. 17, 18.

³ 1 Sam. xix. 24.

⁴ 1 Sam. xx. 33.

⁵ 1 Sam. xxiv. 16.

his care, "had lamented him, and buried him."¹ The greatest warrior in the kingdom was an outlaw when a great invasion of the land by the Philistines took place. For the first time in his life Saul feared before the enemy.² No voice is heard to aid him, no light is given; he is left to the guidance of that self-will which in earlier days he had chosen to follow. The misuser of God's gifts can see no visions. In vain he inquires of the Lord after the ancient manner; the destroyer of God's priests receives no answer by Urim. The newer mode is closed to him also, for he has disobeyed God's prophet. And now the last desperate resolution is taken, and "he who had long grieved the Holy Spirit of God shewed at last that he had quenched it." "Saul will summon by an evil magic . . . the dead from their graves, and win from the world of darkness and of death that knowledge which the world of light and of life refuses to impart to him. This consulting with the witch of Endor on the part of Israel's anointed king was probably as nearly the sin against the Holy Ghost as it was possible for one under the Old Covenant, and before the day of Pentecost, to commit."³ We must not suppose that the appearance of Samuel was an imposture with which the woman succeeded in deluding the king, nor yet that she really possessed the power to summon the Prophet from the grave. None was more startled by it than she herself!⁴ And it was Saul who "perceived that it was Samuel." He bowed before him as in earlier days,⁵ but it was no longer the kiss of peace and assurance of God's favour that he

¹ 1 Sam. xxviii. 3.

² 1 Sam. xxviii. 5.

³ *Shipwrecks of Faith*, by the Archbp. of Dublin.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxviii. 12, 13.

⁵ 1 Sam. xxviii. 14; comp. x. 1.

received. His terrible doom followed. The words are not merely "The Lord hath rejected thee," but "The Lord is become thine enemy;" and the sentence was defeat and death. Can we wonder that he despaired, and fell with his tall form, once so goodly and rising above all others, "all along on the earth"? Through the darkness and the night he returned to his camp on Mount Gilboa, and then on the morrow lost for the first time a battle, and with it his life. He did not care to live, but sought his death; and thus at the last was not divided from his noble son. The refrain of David's lament describes too truly not only the death of Saul, but his life, his gradual fall, and his perversion of God's gifts—"How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"¹

¹ 2 Sam. i. 27.

LESSON VIII.

THE YOUTH OF DAVID.

WE know more of David than of any of the chief men of Israelitish history. We have not only a detailed history of his life, but in his Psalms the outpouring of his heart, the deepest feelings of his soul, expressed at different periods of his life. Many of the events of his life are typical of those of our Blessed Lord. These events called forth a wonderful development of thought and feeling, which, passing through the Psalms of David into the meditations of all the people of Israel, prepared the way for the Son of David. David was born at Bethlehem, which from that circumstance had first a certain sanctity attached to it. To his birthplace David seems to have been specially attached; he longed in his thirst for the water from its well,¹ and it retained many years after the name of "City of David."² In his childhood the boy must have heard from his father Jesse the stories of his own family, and must have learned that he numbered Rahab the Canaanitess and Ruth the Moabitess among his ancestors. It was to Moab that he turned in the after days of his wanderings for a refuge for his father

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 15.

² Luke ii. 4.

and mother,¹ he remembered kindnesses received from the kindred people of Ammon,² he suffered some of the Jebusite population of Jerusalem to retain their property after he had conquered them, and he employed in his armies a great number of foreigners. These were results of his own mixed ancestry, preparations for Him Who should open the Church to Gentile as well as Jew.

David's early occupation was that of keeping his father's sheep, in those days a dangerous employment, from the wild beasts who came from the thickets of Jordan to attack the sheep. With these he early fought, and his conquest over a lion and a bear made him known among his people as "a mighty man of valour." This open-air life no doubt produced in him the intense love of nature that breathes throughout the Psalms. While watching the sheep he "considered the heavens, the moon and the stars, which God had ordained;" and feeling the apparent littleness of man, wondered at God's love towards him, while from his employment he learned to picture the tenderness and watchfulness of that love. "The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing." It is the first hallowing of the shepherd life, and the first comparison made between it and a wise pastoral care for men. The comparison was not forgotten; it was repeated again in later times in the words, "He took him from the sheepfolds . . . to feed Jacob his people,"³ and its spirit reappears in the expressions, "Hear, O Thou Shepherd of Israel," "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture," which prepare the way for the gracious words, "I am the Good Shepherd."

¹ 1 Sam. xxii. 3.² 2 Sam. x. 2, xxiv. 18, 24.³ Psa. lxxviii. 70, 71.

It was literally from the sheep that David was called for his first anointing. It is quite clear that he was anointed not to be at that time king, but to be Saul's successor. For this reason Samuel was not to disturb the peace of Saul's kingdom by any public announcement of it.¹ David knew this, and never attempted to dispute the kingdom with Saul, though for the same reason he did dispute it afterwards with Saul's son Ishbosheth. From this time "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David," and he may thus be numbered from his youth among the prophets. He became known for the power of his prophetic utterances, which were frequently connected with music and poetry. This power was now employed to soothe the unhappy hours of the king. David's Psalms have consoled many weary ones since they were first sung to the maddened king of Israel; and in this as in so many other things he is a type of Him Who is the Consoler of the world. Like Him also he was content to remain in obscurity until God's time came when he should become renowned; retiring from Saul's court once more to keep the sheep at Bethlehem.

But the event soon followed which made his name for ever renowned. In his combat with the Philistine we see the strong simple faith which never even in the darkest scenes of his life forsook him. All such combats are pictures of the faith that overcometh the world, but none is more strikingly so than this one, when the young unarmed shepherd boy laid low the champion of Gath. It was a deed that could never be forgotten in Israel, and was followed by David's rapid rise as the chief warrior at Saul's court. We cannot wonder that the

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 2.

king, who had only before seen him during his dark hours of illness and unsettled reason, did not recognise again the youth who had once charmed those heavy hours.¹ The deeper side of David's nature is shewn in his constant unwavering faith, the more human side is marked by his intense power of loving and of inspiring love. When we consider the peculiar relation in which David was placed with Jonathan, we shall find the story of their friendship the most touching and the most lovely of any recorded in history. Each of the two knew that his life was in the hand of the other. When Saul's attempt on David's life commenced, it was Jonathan who pleaded for him, who concealed him and aided his escape. Yet Jonathan in his turn said, "Thou shalt . . . while yet I live, shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not;"² for in the natural expectation of outliving his father he felt that then his life would be in David's hands. All along he knew that his lost inheritance, lost through no sin of his own, would go to David;³ all along David knew that it would be his, yet taunts addressed to Jonathan and persecutions suffered by David never raised one flame of jealousy to disturb the holiness of their love. Scarcely less fervent, though perhaps less noble, was the love of Jonathan's sister Michal for David. It was perhaps not kindled until David's fame had greatly increased; and possibly those songs in which the women of Israel sang the praises of their young hero, while they raised the jealousy of the father, fixed the love of the daughter.⁴ In spite of every secret effort made by Saul for his destruction, David became the king's son-

¹ 1 Sam. xvii. 15, 55-58.² 1 Sam. xix. 4, 5, xx. 19, 41, 42, xx. 14.³ 1 Sam. xxiii. 17, xx. 30, 31.⁴ 1 Sam. xviii. 7, 8, 20.

in-law, the constant conqueror of the Philistines, the darling of the people.¹ Secret means having failed, the king tried open ones.² His state became worse, and David's music no longer soothed it. In his mad jealousy he separated himself from the one who might be called his good genius. The love and watchfulness of his wife Michal saved David from the final and prepared attack on his life.³ Her expression to him—which should be translated, “If thou save not thy soul to-night”—is repeated by David in the Psalms in which he commemorated his deliverance, and said, “They lie in wait for my *soul*,”⁴ “Lest he tear my *soul* like a lion.”⁵ By the morning he was far from their reach, and able in safety to sing, as he said, of God's power; “Yea,” he added, in his joy at having left behind night, his enemies, treachery, and ungodliness, “I will sing aloud of Thy mercy in the morning.”⁶

A period of trial and of suffering was to follow. Remembering his anointing by Samuel, it was to the Prophet that David now fled. Welcomed by him, he joined the company of the prophets at Naioth, or “the pastures” of Ramah. It was but for a short time, but served no doubt to strengthen the faith of David and to shew him how he should direct his future course. He seems never again to have met the Prophet who anointed him, and was God's instrument in taking him from the sheepfolds. Driven from Ramah, David fled to Nob, a town on the Mount of Olives, where, since the destruction of Shiloh, the tabernacle was set up.⁷ The Ark was still far away, but round the tabernacle many priests had collected; and David, forced away from the

¹ 1 Sam. xviii. 27, 16.² 1 Sam. xix. 9, 10.³ 1 Sam. xix. 11.⁴ Ps. lix. 3.⁵ Ps. vii. 2.⁶ Ps. lix. 16.⁷ 1 Sam. xxi. 1.

company of the prophets, came to inquire of the Lord through the priest, and to seek for food and arms. Ahimelech the high-priest failed in that courage in defence of the right which Samuel had shewn; yet, as if in punishment for that failure, the revenge of the king, which never attacked Samuel, fell on him and his. Saul no doubt justified his massacre of the priests to himself by the fact that they had allowed the holy shewbread to be eaten by one not a priest contrary to the law; it was his old error reappearing, each time in a darker form. With him, to sacrifice was better than to obey; the ceremonial law stood above all laws of humanity. But the faith of David enabled him to rise to a higher region; he knew that "the life was more than meat," and his deed gave to the Lord Jesus an example to illustrate the meaning of the words, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice."¹ The massacre of the priests, by laying one more crime on his conscience, was certain to increase Saul's hatred of David, and accordingly from this time his pursuit of him becomes more hot.

From Nob to his enemies the Philistines, from them again to an outlaw's life in the cave of Adullam; sometimes in a fortress or "hold," for a short time in a strong town Keilah; sometimes in the forest or the wilderness among the cliffs of Engedi or the pastures of the southern Carmel,² David from this time led the life of a wanderer. Pursued by one who had been his friend, betrayed again and again by those among whom he sought for refuge, the joyous youth, the successful conqueror, went at this time through a very furnace of affliction. Yet some consolation still remained.

¹ Matt. xii. 3-7.

² 1 Sam. xxi. 10, xxii. 1, 3-5, xxiii. 4, 14, 19, 29, xxv. 5, 13, 20.

A prophet of the Lord counselled him,¹ a priest inquired for him, and to both he was obedient. Gradually, too, a band of men gathered around him, Gadites came from beyond Jordan, children of Benjamin and Judah, captains of thousands from Manasseh.² Already the sense that this wanderer was the chosen of Jehovah was gaining ground; and at length this sense was expressed by Amasa, David's nephew, who, speaking by the Spirit of God, exclaimed, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thy helpers, for thy God helpeth thee." Peace, however, seemed to be far off. Fighting, struggling, flying, David's time of trial was a heavy one. What wonder if the watchword of his life at this time was the prayer, "Destroy not."³ Twice the life of Saul was in his power, and he respected the Lord's anointed and saved him.

But mingling with these nobler traits are darker features, which betray the imperfection of David's character. He sinned in the oath he took to revenge himself on Nabal, but rose above the obedience of the letter to that of the spirit, when he thanked God that he had not kept the vow. He sinned when he deceived Achish,⁴ and reaped the reward of his deceit in being forced to march for a time with his enemies, and in the destruction and harrying of his people at Ziklag during his absence.⁵

Do we think, when we read these stories, of the lives we have read of other freebooters and out-

¹ 1 Sam. xxii. 5, xxiii. 6, 9.

² 1 Chron. xii. 8, 16, 19, 20.

³ Such seems to be the meaning of the words "Al-taschith," which are found in the headings to Psalms lvii., lviii., lix., lxxv.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxvii. 10.

⁵ 1 Sam. xxix. 2, xxx. 1-4.

laws? Are we inclined to ask, Was this a fitting life for him who was to establish the kingdom in Israel, who was all the time the anointed of the Lord? Let us turn to the inner life of this period, and there find the answer to our question. More than in the early shepherd days, more than in his wars or life at the court of Saul, David felt and acknowledged the close presence of God during his wanderings. In the dry and thirsty land where no water was it was yet for God that his soul thirsted;¹ His loving-kindness was better than life itself; when cruelly betrayed, his comfort was that the goodness of God endured yet daily;² and what bursts of joy and glory to God came from his lips, even during this terrible time of his life, when he might, if faith had failed, have imagined himself cast off and forgotten. He "wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth,"³ but the desert was full of God, the mountain shewed forth God, his rock, the dark sides of the cave were the shadow of God's wings, in which refuge he exclaimed, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."⁴ And when times of depression came, with them came deeper and deeper spiritual experiences—"When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path;" and from the depth of this experience arose the clear perception which ever distinguished David from Saul,—a perception of the value of the spirit over the letter of the law. Separated from outward ordinances in his wild life, he could exclaim, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire. . . . Then said I, Lo, I come. . . . I delight to do Thy will, O my God."⁵

¹ Psa. lxxiii. 1. ² Psa. lii. ³ Heb. xi. 32, 38. ⁴ Psa. lvii. ⁵ Psa. xl.

This earlier portion of David's life was thus in a twofold sense a preparation : first, of David for his future position as king of Israel ; second, for the growth of the Messianic idea in the mind of the nation. David's early seclusion, his foreign connexions, his fame as a successful warrior, his training among men of various character at the court of Saul, and finally his time of trial and wandering, all these fitted him for his future life. These things prepared his nation also for the life of Him Who made Jew and Gentile one, Who conquered in greater victories than those of Israel over the Philistines, and Who shewed the world that the Kingdom of God could only be entered through tribulation.

LESSON IX.

THE REIGN OF DAVID.

WHEN the wild Amalekite, thinking to please David, brought to him the crown and royal ornaments of Saul with the news of his death,¹ David's first emotions were those of indignation at one who could slay the Lord's anointed, and of sorrow for the deaths of his earliest benefactor and his dearest friend. But the news necessarily produced other thoughts; it was the announcement to him that God's time had come, and his period of wandering was over. He did not inquire of God as to whether he should take the kingdom, but simply as to the city in which he should first set up his rule.² When Hebron was indicated to him, he at once went there, and being again anointed, this time publicly, commenced his reign. That at first he was only recognised by Judah made no difference to his position; he knew that he should at last be king over all, and even extend his rule over the heathen, and that a people whom he had not known should serve him.³

Although not the first king, David was yet in a very real sense the founder of the Jewish monarchy. He established and really carried out the true Kingship

¹ 2 Sam. i.

² 2 Sam. ii. 1.

³ Psa. xviii. 43.

which Samuel had in vain hoped to see realized in Saul. This idea of Kingship which was now beginning to grow among the Jews was very important, as adding something to their anticipations for the future. The establishment of the priesthood and of the sacrifices had indicated the need of a mediator who could offer to God for sin; the rise of the prophets had familiarized the people with the position of a teacher of righteousness; finally, the establishment of a monarchy taught the expectation of a Messianic kingdom. The Israelitish kings were to be, first, leaders in battle, second, executors of justice in war and peace;¹ they were absolute rulers, in whose hands lay the very persons and lives of their subjects; they had the power of imposing taxes and exacting personal service; yet more, in Israel the king was the anointed of the Lord, the very representative of Jehovah to his people. Thus, when the hope of the Deliverer grew stronger and clearer, all these institutions aided in making it understood. Priest, Prophet, King, each contributed to the idea of the future Messiah. The Priesthood taught them that He Who was to come must take away sins; the Prophets taught that He must witness against ungodliness; the establishment of David's monarchy added this thought, that the Deliverer must have power over all, must go forth conquering and to conquer, and must be the Anointed or Messiah, the Christ of God. And one more thought began from this time to mingle itself with the others; David inherited his kingdom after great sorrow and tribulation; would not the highest ideal of a ruler be henceforth joined to that of a sufferer?

¹ 1 Sam. viii. 20.

For seven years and a half David ruled over Judah in Hebron, while Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, ruled over the rest of Israel, making Mahanaim, on the east of Jordan, his residence.¹ The schism of the kingdom was caused by Abner's strong attachment to the house of Saul. Great captain as he was, he had influence and power enough to dispute the kingdom with David, though he certainly knew, as did all the elders of Israel, who it was the Lord had chosen.² Fighting against this knowledge, Abner struggled to maintain Ishbosheth's cause, until a fatal quarrel separated his great follower from the son of Saul. The quarrel was fatal to both, for it led to the violent death of each. In David's lament for Abner we see again the generosity and the love which made him cling to the early friends and protectors of his youth. He had lamented over Saul and Jonathan, who fell on the field of battle; how much more should he mourn when a prince and a great man was fallen in Israel, and had died, as he bitterly said, "as a fool dieth."³ David's age was now thirty-six, but already the brightness and hope of early life were passing from him. He could no longer hope that his throne would be surrounded by those whom he most loved and trusted. "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee," had been Jonathan's expression of a hope which was quenched for ever on Mount Gilboa. Michal, David's wife, had been given to another, and though she now returned to him, the early love between them seems to have been broken;⁴ while in the place of the great Abner appears now the fierce stern form of his murderer Joab. He and his

¹ 2 Sam. ii. 8, 9. ² 2 Sam. iii. 9, 10, v. 2. ³ 2 Sam. iii. 38, 33.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxv. 44; 2 Sam. iii. 13-16.

brother Abishai, the sons of David's half-sister Zeruiah,¹ were probably of about the same age as David himself; their relationship to the king, and their extraordinary valour and activity, marked them out as supporters of the future monarchy; yet David shrank with gloomy foreboding from their companionship. "I am this day weak, though anointed king," he said; "and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, be too hard for me."²

The murder of Ishbosheth placed the whole kingdom at length in David's hands. His vengeance on the murderers proceeded from a different cause to that which had moved him in the case of Saul. The Amalekite had slain "the Lord's anointed;" David did not regard Ishbosheth to be the Lord's anointed, but as one who, innocent of all crime, had been foully murdered on his bed, and he therefore punished his murderers with death.³ And now all Israel was again one united kingdom. A great feast at Hebron celebrated the joy with which the people assembled with "one heart to make David king."⁴ Hebron was no longer central enough for the capital of the kingdom. Saul had been content to live at his native place of Gibeah, caring little for the unity of the kingdom either politically or religiously, and evidently favouring his own tribe of Benjamin above all others.⁵ This would not do for David, and he resolved on fixing his capital at Jerusalem, which, half in Judah, half in Benjamin, formed a fitting centre of national life. Jerusalem, or Jebus, was still in the hands of the original inhabitants, the Jebusites.

¹ It has been conjectured that Abigail and Zeruiah were daughters of Jesse's wife by a former husband, Nahash, king of the Ammonites. Compare 1 Chron. ii. 16 with 2 Sam. xvii. 25.

² 2 Sam. iii. 39.

³ 2 Sam. iv. 10-12.

⁴ 1 Chron. xii. 38-40.

⁵ 1 Sam. xxii. 7.

The fortress was built on a high table-land, and was separated again from the rocky plateau of which it forms a part by deep ravines or valleys on the west, south, and south-east. So deep were these clefts that the Jebusites considered their fortress impregnable, and tauntingly exclaimed that the blind and the lame would suffice to defend it.¹ "All Israel" had marched with David, but it was Joab's courage and activity that first gained the rocky height and won for him the position which Abner had formerly held.² At once David repaired and improved the city, and fixed there his royal residence; from henceforth Israel was to have a true capital; not under Saul's pomegranate or Deborah's palm-tree, but on the throne in the royal city was Israel's king to do judgment and justice. It was a great change in the history of the nation; it implied the stability and permanency of the kingdom established,—which from henceforth grew and strengthened itself on every side, while not the least significant fact in connexion with the new conquest is that the king's palace was built, as the result of the first foreign alliance, by that Hiram king of Tyre who "was ever a lover of David."³

From this time the names Jerusalem and Zion⁴ become the most memorable in Jewish history. They are even more than that; the whole significance of David's conquest did not end when Titus overthrew Jerusalem with Roman armies. The teaching conveyed to us by the thought of a "Holy City," a "City of God," can only be exhausted when into the New

¹ 2 Sam. v. 6.

² 1 Chron. xi. 4-6.

³ 1 Kings v. 1.

⁴ This was the citadel of Jerusalem, called the "City of David." This last expression, however, is in the New Testament always applied to Bethlehem.

Jerusalem shall be brought "the glory and honour of the nations."¹

That teaching however begins now with David. He desired to hallow the chief city in the same manner as the nation had been hallowed. Israel was to be separate from the heathen and the centre of a pure worship of the true God. So David wished both to "cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord,"² and to establish there the great seat of the national worship. To this end he resolved to bring up the ark, which, taken by the Philistines and returned by them in terror, had for many years rested at Kirjath-jearim, and had quite ceased to be the centre of worship. Much did he think of it in sleepless nights,³ earnestly did he consult over it with his people,⁴ and at length he assembled not one or two tribes, but all the now united Israel, to bring up the ark of God to Zion. The unlawful manner in which this was at first attempted, and the consequent death of Uzza, delayed the accomplishment of his purpose, but after three months the attempt was renewed, and the ark was brought to Zion.⁵ To David it was the fulfilment of the very purpose for which the Lord had chosen him; the tribes of Israel were now one in a sense in which they had never been since the time of Joshua; it remained only for the church to be one, and putting away all schisms and idolatries, to worship at one central place, and there to appear before Jehovah. Remembering this, we shall not wonder at the burst of joy with which David expressed the feelings of his heart on that day. His gifts of music, of poetry, and of prophecy were all called on to shew forth his thankfulness;

¹ Rev. xxi. 2, 26.

² Psa. ci. 8.

³ Psa. cxxxii. 3-5.

⁴ 1 Chron. xiii., xv.

⁵ 1 Chron. xiii. 1-3.

while laying aside his kingly garments, and adopting a priestly white ephod, he danced for joy before the ark. His former sorrows come to his mind, and he exclaims, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness."¹ So, with priests, Levites, and singers, the king of Israel ascended to that rocky citadel so lately in possession of the heathen. Already in his mind it is Jehovah's own home. "Arise, O Lord," he cries, "into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength;"² and he bids the very gates lift up their heads that the King of Glory may come in.³ Could any think that he meant to call himself now in the full glory of his new kingdom by this title? Nay, it is "Jehovah strong and mighty," worshipped now in this age of victories by the new name of Lord of Hosts (Jehovah-Tsebaoth). It was the greatest day of David's life; yet one shade fell upon it. Michal, the wife of his youth, saw in it nothing of its high meaning, but a mere degradation of the office of the king. Such a separation in inward feeling could but be followed by a more outward separation; Michal ceases from this time to stand by David's side in the story of his life.

The bringing up of the ark and the consequent sanctifying of Jerusalem connects itself with the conquest of the city. But between these two events probably took place David's two victories over the Philistines which are recorded in 2 Sam. v. He was victorious from this time in all his wars, and the contrast is very striking between the order and vigour of these early years of the monarchy and the disunion which led to continual servitudes in the times of the Judges.

¹ Psa. xxx. 11.² Psa. cxxxii.³ Psa. xxiv.

Victories over the Moabites and Ammonites on the east of Jordan, the Philistines on the west coast, Edomites in the south, and even over the Syrians of Damascus, follow one another in rapid succession. "All at once," it has been said, "Israel had become the great power in Western Asia." The spoils of conquest and the tributes from surrounding nations caused wealth quickly to flow in, and already the gold and the brass used in such quantities in the next reign begin to accumulate. The chief men and officers of the state are regularly appointed; Joab is captain of the host, Benaiah over the body-guard of Cherethites and Pelethites, who appear to have been foreigners, possibly Philistines who had entered David's service. There are what we should call civil and ecclesiastical offices also; a recorder and a scribe or secretary; priests, Levites, and singers, appointed for the service before the ark.

So were fulfilled most literally the words of Balaam, "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly."¹ In David's mind the star that rose, the sceptre that bore rule, was ever something more than the brightness of his own glory, the power of his own victories. The unseen Ruler was to him the true King of Israel, and as he sat in the gorgeous palace which the Tyrian king had built him, his heart was grieved at the contrast of its magnificence with that of the tent which he had made for the ark.² What he had done could but be temporary; the sanctuary was still divided, for the ark was in Zion, the ancient taber-

¹ Numb. xxiv. 17, 18.

² 2 Sam. vii. ; 1 Chron. xvii.

nacle at Gibeon, to which it seems to have been moved from Nob. While Israel was but a wandering people, a tent might be their fitting place of worship, but it was very near to David's heart to raise one permanent sanctuary, more beautiful than any palace, to the King of kings.

Nathan's message to him forbade his carrying out this scheme himself; he had been a man of war, and the idea of peace, of Shiloh, must not be dis-severed from the building of God's house. But his desire did not go unrewarded. A new revelation is made to him concerning the promised Seed. The establishment of the kingdom had unfolded the idea of royalty to the Israelites, but now David is expressly told that the kingdom and the throne shall be established for ever, and that his own seed shall inherit it. Whatever iniquity may afterwards be committed or punishment deserved, that royalty shall not pass from David's house as it had done from Saul's; and the house which he so desired to build shall be built by those that come after him. At this time it does not seem that David was told in which of his sons this promise would be fulfilled. Like Abraham, he may have expected that his first-born, or his darling Absalom, would be the chosen one. But the promise filled him with awe and rapture. His own elevation from the sheep-fold to the throne seemed in comparison a small thing.¹ The thought that Israel should for ever be a people, that a righteous kingdom should always stand, and that his children should be those who should maintain it, was to him far more than that his own glory and state should be secured. As he lived on and thought more of this

¹ 2 Sam. vii. 18, 19.

promise, deeper views with regard to it seem to have arisen in his mind, convictions that no mere line of earthly sovereigns could truly fulfil its whole meaning. There are many indications of this in his Psalms ; perhaps the best example may be found in *Psa. cx.* The offspring of David is there represented as partner of the might and the dominion of the Almighty ; his rule extends itself from David's new capital of Zion ; his people will pay to him, not tribute like the Syrians and Moabites, but freewill offerings, and he shall combine in one the offices of the Priest and of the King, as Melchisedec, the former ruler of this newly-possessioned Jerusalem, had done. This vision is clearly a revelation of something greater even than the continuance of David's own office. It became a difficulty that could not be explained to the Pharisees of later days when they strove to narrow the promises of the kingdom to a mere literal fulfilment :¹ it was at length unfolded fully in the words, " This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool."²

¹ *Matt. xxii. 41-46.*

² *Heb. x. 12, 13.*

LESSON X.

THE REIGN OF DAVID—*continued.*

DAVID'S rule over the united kingdom of Judah and Israel lasted for thirty-three years,¹ of which the first ten seem to have been years of continued prosperity and success. He had indeed lost the early friends of his youth, but he cherished near him the son and servants of Jonathan; and Nathan and Gad, the prophets of the Lord, stood by his throne as Samuel would fain have stood by that of Saul. Dark clouds and storms of trouble, however, afflicted the latter part of his reign, and it was his own sin that brought this on him.

When we read the shameful story of David's great crime,² with all the sickening details which are so unflinchingly narrated by the sacred historian, we are tempted to feel, as David did at Nathan's story, that the man who had done that thing was worthy to die. Yet the story, common enough as a description of the crime of an Eastern monarch, is almost without a parallel in its subsequent details. The boldness of the prophet in reproving the king had been equalled by Samuel's words to Saul, and was repeated again when

¹ 2 Sam. v. 5.

² 2 Sam. xi.

John the Baptist reproved Herod. But it is rare indeed to find the king neither making the excuses of Saul, nor taking the revenge of Herod, but uttering at once the simple words, "I have sinned against the Lord." The Psalms of David may supply us with some explanation of this. We must remember that though fallen, this man, who had throughout his life lived in continual communion with God, could not now sever himself from it,—could not bear to exist and enjoy the fruits of sin deprived of the rapture of the Divine intercourse.

"When I kept silence," he says, "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand is heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."¹ As a commentator² on this Psalm has expressed it: "The more he strove against confessing, the louder did conscience speak; and while it was not in his power to silence this inward voice, in which the wrath of God found utterance, he cried the whole day, viz. for help; but while his heart was still unbroken, he cried, yet received no answer." The heart was broken however by the prophet's words, and bowed itself in utter humility beneath his reproof; with marvellous clearness he recognised that the sin before God was the great overwhelming stain, so great as to outweigh all other debts, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight,"³ he exclaims, and perceives as none of his race had ever done before the powerlessness of costly sacrifices to atone for such a crime. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God

¹ Psal. xxxii.² Delitzsch.³ Psal. li.

are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Throughout his life we have seen that David rose above his age in the spiritual interpretation that he put on the ceremonial law, but so clear an insight as this, which has given words to the sighs of many a returning penitent, could only have arisen from the depths of such a repentance.

He was forgiven, but he was not the less punished; all the weight of the sentence pronounced against him fell on his head, and he accepted it, not only without murmuring, but without ever doubting God's forgiveness. He never expected pardon to mean remission of punishment, and he never valued the pardon less because he suffered. He reckoned himself "blessed," because "his transgression was forgiven;"¹ but, when the Lord struck his little child with sickness that it died, he "came into the house of the Lord and worshipped;"² when forced as a fugitive to flee from that city which he had conquered and sanctified, he said, "Here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him;" when Shimei cursed him, he repressed the anger of Abishai with the words, "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David."³

But not the less did David suffer under the severity of his afflictions. His heart was ever full of love to others; passionate in all his attachments, he who in his youth had felt Jonathan's love to pass the love of women, now in his older years poured out his whole affection upon his children. He fasted and wept for the little infant stricken with sickness; he "mourned every day" for his first-born Amnon; he could not displease the goodly Adonijah; he knew not how to live

¹ Psa. xxxii. 1.² 2 Sam. xii. 20, xv.³ 2 Sam. xvi. 10.

without Absalom.¹ Back from banishment he willingly brought him, his soul longing to go forth unto him;² but it was only to meet with ingratitude and treachery. This best-beloved and most beautiful of David's children was the one through whose instrumentality the punishment was to be accomplished. As the king passed into exile, weeping as he crossed Olivet,³ the most bitter thought was that one, "My son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life; how much more now may this Benjamite do it?"⁴ Yet rising as ever above superstition, he forbade the ark to be brought and used as a charm for safety, or taken into battle⁵ as once before by Hophni and Phinehas. With the desire that the Church of God should remain settled, however much he himself might wander, he sent back both the priests and the ark to the city which he called God's habitation. Then followed the three months of exile on the other side of Jordan, and at length the crushing news of the death of his unworthy but much loved son. His return to Jerusalem succeeded; but it was a mournful return, embittered by feelings of increased hatred to Joab, the murderer of his son, by fresh feuds and murders among his nearest attendants and relations, by a new Benjamite conspiracy, and by the ominous quarrel between Judah and the rest of Israel,⁶ which seemed the prelude to a new disruption of the kingdom. The success of Absalom's conspiracy is perhaps partly accounted for by Nathan's words to David: "By this deed thou hast given great

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 16, xiii. 37; 1 Kings i. 6; 2 Sam. xiii. 39.

² 2 Sam. xiv. 1, 21, 33.

³ 2 Sam. xv. 30.

⁴ 2 Sam. xvi. 11.

⁵ 2 Sam. xv. 24-29.

⁶ 2 Sam. xix. 13; 1 Kings ii. 5; 2 Sam. xx. 1-13, xix. 41-43.

occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." The good principle, the fear of the Lord, had been enthroned in the person of the king, but "wicked doers" were not yet "cut off from the city of the Lord;"¹ there were many who, terrified at the righteous vigour of the king, gloried in his fall from holiness, and had gladly seized the opportunity to throw off his yoke. Yet it was but for a time. The king could still command the allegiance and "bow the heart"² of the better sort among his people.

Other calamities however overshadowed the remainder of his reign. It is impossible to fix the date of the three years' famine which afflicted the land in consequence of Saul's conduct to the Gibeonites;³ in that matter David was guiltless. It was otherwise with the pestilence which followed his numbering of the people. The writer of the Book of Kings tells us that the Lord moved David to this act; while in the Chronicles it is said that Satan provoked David.⁴ God permitted Satan's temptation of David, as He did his temptation of Job; and David fell under the temptation. In his youth he had trusted always in the deliverance of the Lord. Now the thought of the great numbers that he could assemble in his army, the great increase of military power, which gave promise of future conquests, lifted up his heart in pride; and he desired to leave a record of what he had achieved in enrolling so many together. The pride of heart was punished immediately; but the voice of Gad, as earlier that of Nathan, sufficed to rouse David from his sin, even before the punishment fell. His desire to "fall into the hand of the Lord" shews the

¹ Psa. ci.² 2 Sam. xviii. 14.³ 2 Sam. xxi. 1.⁴ 2 Sam. xxiv. 1; 1 Chron. xxi. 1.

return to trust and dependence on the Unseen which for a time had been obscured ; with love which reminds us of Moses' yearnings over the people, he prays that the punishment may fall on him rather than on them ; and with something of that feeling which so many years before had caused him to pour out the precious water of the well of Bethlehem before the Lord, he exclaims, " Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."

The many sorrows of David's heart found expression in the Psalms, in which he held close commune with God. Inspired by the Spirit of God, the words in which he expressed his sorrow contained a fulness of meaning which he himself perhaps scarcely grasped. As it has been said, " exercised and proved by the cross," he was " the first to introduce to the knowledge of the Church a suffering Messiah."¹ Sorrow is raised and dignified, and thus the way is as it were prepared for a further and later revelation ; that of the Messiah, king, priest, and prophet, being also the Victim and Sufferer.

David's own life and character tended to teach a further knowledge of the Seed Who was to come, but the great growth in the knowledge of his time sprang from the clear light thrown on the kingly office, and the position of " the Lord's anointed," joined with Nathan's distinct promise that this office should continue in David's line, and that of his kingdom there should be no end.² The hopes of the people were henceforth centred in one single family. We have seen

¹ HENGSTENBERG's *Christology of the Old Testament*.

² See the great prophecy of 2 Sam. vii. 12-14, referred to in Heb. i. 5 and Isa. lv. 3—the key to many of the Psalms.

that David probably did not know at first in which of his sons this promise should be fulfilled; but before his death a further revelation was granted to him. When his youngest son was born¹ he gave to him the name "Solomon," or "the peaceful one," remembering doubtless that he who was to be the future builder of God's house must not be "a man of war."² But at some future time it had been clearly made known, that this youngest son was to be the future king.³ As in the case of the two sons of Isaac and Rebecca, it was the younger who was to rule the elder. In this son, so young and tender, "whom alone," as he said, "God hath chosen,"⁴ David rested all the hopes of the close of his life. He saw in him the peaceful successor who should unite the kingdom, and build that house of God for which he himself was only worthy to make preparation. He commanded that Solomon should be anointed even before his own death, and he put down all rebellion against him.⁵ And kindling at the hope of a glorious future, he seemed to return back in spirit to the times of the first conquest, and spoke of "possessing this good land, and leaving it for an inheritance;"⁶ while his charge to Solomon echoes again the words of Moses to Joshua, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed." In his "last words" "the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel," uttered with all the fervour of his youth his praise and faith in God, and with only a passing allusion to his sorrows rested on the remembrance of special promise made to him; "Yet He hath made

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 24.³ 1 Chron. xxviii. 5, 6.⁵ 1 Kings i. 34, 43.² 1 Chron. xxviii. 3.⁴ 1 Chron. xxix. 1.⁶ 1 Chron. xxviii. 8, 20.

with me an everlasting covenant.”¹ He “slept with his fathers,”² and as the Apostle Peter said³ long afterwards, “his sepulchre is with us unto this day.” But his hopes did not end with his life here. A first gleam of a faith and hope in another world shewed itself in his words when his child was taken from him, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me;”⁴ a trust in a yet greater resurrection appeared in his prophetic Psalms.⁵

“Therefore,” says St. Peter, “being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption.”⁶

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

² 1 Kings ii. 10.

³ Acts ii. 29.

⁴ 2 Sam. xii. 23.

⁵ Psa. xvi. 8-11.

⁶ Acts ii. 30, 31.

LESSON XI.

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON.

IT is not perfectly clear at what time the Lord made known to David in which of his sons the promise with regard to the succession should be fulfilled. Before the birth of Solomon a revelation of his future greatness was given,¹ and at his birth his names bore witness to the position that he was to occupy. God's prophet Nathan called him Jedidiah, "the darling of Jehovah;" with a still deeper prophetic insight his father named him Solomon, "the peaceful one." He remembered that he himself, because he was a man of war, was forbidden to build the Temple, and with a feeling rare in times of warfare, the successful warrior gloried in the thought that his son should be a Prince of peace, and thus entitled to build a house for Jehovah.

From his earliest years this thought was held up to Solomon as the ideal of what he was to become. Above all, during his childhood the preparations for the building which he was to raise after his father's death were continually before him; and his after-history shews what deep meaning he attached to this work. Later in life, Solomon looked back to his father's teaching

¹ 1 Chron. xxii. 9.

as his chief guide,¹ and placed before all other earthly helps the training of holy parents. He was still very young when the insurrection of his elder brother Adonijah hastened his public recognition as king even before his father's death.

"I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother ;"² "Solomon, my son, is young and tender."³ These are the only words of love and tenderness that we can find relating to the majestic king who, unequalled in his greatness, seems almost unequalled in his loneliness. Unlike his father, unlike even the first erring king of Israel, Solomon with all his magnificence never apparently inspired love. He commenced his reign with the stern suppression of rebellion and the execution (whether immediately or shortly after) of all those who had been leaders of it. This severity was probably necessary to the ensuring of his own peaceful accession, and to the security of the kingdom. It is evident that the rebellion was carried on in known violation of the choice of the future king indicated both by the Word of God and of the late king David. Now we are told, God's word against Eli's house was fully accomplished, when Abiathar, his last descendant, was thrust out from being priest; now at length the vengeance of God fell on Joab, the murderer of Abner and of Amasa.⁴ Yet over the defection of this last the sacred historian seems to mourn, perhaps remembering the days when Joab's activity scaled the rocky defences of Jerusalem. "Though he turned not after Absalom," he had turned after Adonijah.

The suppression of rebellion confirmed the whole

¹ Prov. iv. 4-6, vi. 20-22.

² Prov. iv. 3.

³ 1 Chron. xxix. 1.

⁴ 1 Kings ii. 27, 32, 28.

kingdom in Solomon's possession; it was now a united kingdom, but it had not yet one permanent centre of worship. David had sanctified Jerusalem by the bringing up of the ark, and had appointed priests and Levites to minister continually before it; but he had also appointed a similar service to be ordered before the ancient tabernacle which now stood at Gibeon.¹ Before it still stood the brazen altar of burnt-offering, which Joab vainly hoped might afford him the privileges of sanctuary;² and the place was still reckoned so holy that it was called "the great high place."³ Inheriting this state of things, it was no sin in Solomon that he "sacrificed and burnt incense in high places;"⁴ he did but continue the arrangements made by his father until the building of the Temple should establish one sacred place for the whole nation. Early in his reign accordingly we find him presenting his offerings before the sacred tent at Gibeon, and there with the actual tabernacle of Moses before him, reminding him of the early wanderings of his nation, the first direct communication from God came to him. Several times in his life did Solomon receive some direct word from God, which, though given in a vision or dream, was to him a distinct revelation. This first time, in the days of his glorious youth, the vision was accompanied by the great gift which distinguished his life.

Let us not miss the stress laid in the narrative upon the *choice* of Solomon. He desired the gift of wisdom before he was specially endowed with it, it was his choice before all things; and the choice "pleased the Lord." Yet good as the choice was, and amply as it was re-

¹ 1 Chron. xvi. 4-6, 37-40.

³ 1 Kings iii. 4.

² 1 Kings ii. 28.

⁴ 1 Kings iii. 3.

warded, it was not perhaps the very highest imaginable. We can scarcely believe that even a Divine wisdom by which he might judge his people would have been the choice of David. To possess, or rather be utterly possessed by, the "free Spirit" of God, was the uppermost thought of the father's mind; to be so guided by it as to rule all men well was the desire of the son. The wish was amply granted; the wisdom given was not mere worldly prudence, but a true insight into knowledge of all kinds, imparted by God's Spirit. It was as truly a heavenly gift as the strength of Samson or the prophetic power of Samuel. And it began to shew itself at once. From Gibeon the king returned to Jerusalem, and offered his sacrifices at the other great high place, before the ark. During the great feast which he then held, the young monarch was called on to give a judgment in a case of difficulty.¹ At once he applied the test supplied by a knowledge of human nature, and reached the truth through it. But this one instance which we possess of Solomon's mode of judgment by no means represents all that we know of his wisdom. Emphatically "the wise man" of his time, the heavenly gift which he possessed shewed itself more particularly in three directions; namely, *Judgment, Knowledge and Government.*

With regard to the first of these we may remark the exalted view of *judgment* and doing justice which he took. The judges who went before him appear to have been more governed by feeling, more apt to say at once with David on hearing of a crime, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die." With Solomon we meet with the calm judicial temper, and with a desire to

¹ 1 Kings iii. 15-28.

sift evidence and quietly arrive at truth. It was to him the highest function of the king. "A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment," he says, "scattereth away all evil with his eyes."¹ And again, "The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever."² And in the Psalm which we may reckon perhaps as the highest strain of poetry which he ever uttered, it is the prevailing thought, "Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment."³ This Psalm expresses a higher view of justice than could ever be fully realized by a mortal man, and thus prepares the way for a belief in Him Who was to be the Judge of all the earth.

Solomon's wisdom displayed itself, secondly, in *knowledge*. Of his nation he is the first who appears to have studied nature scientifically. David's Psalms prove his intense enjoyment of it, but Solomon possessed a real knowledge which was unequalled in his time. "He spake of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes."⁴ As he looked on the "creeping things," and watched the industry of the ants, the lesson occurred to him which applied to the wasteful man, careless of his time;⁵ when he made him "pools of water it was to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees,"⁶ and to bring by means of

¹ Prov. xx. 8.

² Prov. xxix. 14.

³ Psa. lxxii. 1, 2. The words at the head of this Psalm should be translated "A Psalm of Solomon."

⁴ 1 Kings iv. 33.

⁵ Prov. vi. 6-11.

⁶ Eccles. ii. 6.

an aqueduct the water freely to the growing capital. These pools and his gardens are still to be seen by travellers, but the husbandry by which he strove to improve the land has vanished. Yet we know how he valued it from his advice to others to "know the state of their flocks," from the thoughts suggested to him by the sight of "the hay appearing, the tender grass shewing itself."¹ But though these useful purposes occurred to him, his love for the beauty of nature is not less than that of his father. He desired that the cornfields of his country should rustle like those cedars of Lebanon of which he could speak so well,² but he rejoiced also in the beauty of the cedars themselves and the streams which descended from the hills on which they grew.³ Of all his songs but one is left to us, that which we call the "Song of Solomon." It was probably written in his early youth, and there have been many questions and different opinions raised on its full meaning. One thing however is clear and apparent, the writer of it intensely loved the nature by which he was surrounded, it breathes throughout a spirit of youth and spring, a joy that "the winter is past," that "the time of the singing of birds is come."⁴ This knowledge of nature was a part of his wisdom, and it differed from that of the wise of Egypt and of the East⁵ in a most vital manner. They knew perhaps as much of nature as he did, but their very knowledge was a snare to them; the water of the Nile to an Egyptian was not God's gift but God Himself, the bull, the ibis or sacred bird, all were sharers of the Divine nature. To Solomon they were the creatures and works of the Creator, and his admiration of

¹ Prov. xxvii. 23-27.² Psa. lxxii. 16.³ S. of Solomon iv. 8, 15.⁴ Song of Solomon ii. 11-13.⁵ 1 Kings iv. 30, 31.

them drew from him the words, "He hath made every thing beautiful in His time."¹ The very foundation and beginning of his knowledge was "the fear of the Lord."²

But beside judgment and knowledge, Solomon's wisdom was also mightily shown in *government*. He was born to be a Prince of peace, and he valued peace as no king before him had done; until the later and sadder years of his life, peace, plenty and prosperity were the characteristics of his reign. "Judah and Israel were many, eating and drinking and making merry," they "dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree."³ And now began to flourish the arts of peace, commerce and trade. These Solomon had so much at heart that he journeyed himself to the shores of the Red Sea to encourage them,⁴ and under his rule the Israelites first became a maritime people, and possessed two navies, one for Western, the other for Eastern traffic. To strengthen the peace and aid the commerce of his extended empire, Solomon entered into relations and made treaties with many surrounding nations. With the king of Egypt, whose daughter he married,⁵ and with Hiram, king of Tyre, his father's friend,⁶ he was allied, and the immediate results of the peace of his country and of his foreign alliances were a splendour and magnificence which had hitherto been unseen in Israel. His palace, his throne, the vessels which he used, the state that he maintained, were a world's wonder; his people marvelled at the strange animals, the precious spices, the precious stones (so often mentioned by him),⁷ the silver and the gold made

¹ Eccles. iii. 11.

² Prov. i. 7.

³ 1 Kings iv. 20, 25.

⁴ 2 Chron. viii. 17.

⁵ 1 Kings iv. 1.

⁶ 1 Kings v. 1-12.

⁷ Prov. iii. 14, 15, xx. 15.

by him so plentiful. The magnificence of Solomon became a proverb, and was unrivalled in the Jewish annals. It was used to convey a lesson by Him Whose justice was not administered after the sight of His eyes,¹ Whose dominion was truly "unto the ends of the earth,"² "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."³ Pointing to the colours of the flowers of the field, colours which no art of man can ever fully reproduce, He said to those around that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.⁴

¹ Isa. xi. 3.

² Psa. lxxii. 8.

³ Col. ii. 3.

⁴ Matt. vi. 29.

LESSON XII.

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON—*Continued.*

IF the greatest day of David's life was that on which he brought up the Ark of God to Zion, with joy and thankfulness at the visible sign of God's presence in his newly conquered city, the most memorable day to Solomon was certainly that on which he dedicated the completed Temple to Jehovah. It had been the great thought of his youth, the thing which, we may almost say, he felt himself born to do. His father had made great preparation for it, and the spot where it should be built had been indicated by the building of that altar which was raised on the purchased threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Here David had sacrificed, and had already called the place "the house of the Lord."¹

Solomon continued the preparations, and in the fourth year of his reign began the building. It took seven years to build, and was completed in the eleventh year of his reign.² It was not however apparently dedicated until the king had finished all the buildings on which he was engaged, one of which was his own palace.

¹ 1 Chron. xxii. 2-5, xxi. 28-30, xxii. 1; 2 Chron. iii. 1.

² 1 Kings vi. 37, 38.

This work occupied him for thirteen more years, so that the great day of dedication took place probably in the twenty-fourth year of his reign.¹ While it was in building a direct communication from God to Solomon took place, a message full of encouragement as to the work on which he was engaged. The Feast of Tabernacles was the time chosen by Solomon for the great day of dedication, when a large number of people were certain to be assembled at Jerusalem, which had become the place to which "the tribes went up"² to keep the three great feasts of the year. Henceforth the Temple at Jerusalem was to be the central seat of worship, the great house of prayer to all the people. The two services hitherto maintained, one at Gibeon, the other before the ark on Mount Zion, were now to be joined, and accordingly we find that the priests brought up both "the ark of the Lord and the tabernacle of the congregation,"³ that they might find their resting-place for ever together. This is not the only proof of the care with which the Temple and its services were shewn to be no new kind of worship, but a continuation and perfecting of the old. The building itself displayed it. It was in plan and arrangement an exact reproduction of the tabernacle, with only these two differences—its dimensions were exactly double those of the tabernacle, and it was a building, a "settled place," and not a moveable tent. The Temple itself was, according to our ideas, a very small building, smaller than the average size of a parish church. But it was looked on by the Jews as an inner sanctuary; and for purposes of worship the outer courts

¹ 1 Kings vi. 11-13, vii. 1, viii. 1, ix. 1, 2.

² Psa. cxxii. 4.

³ 1 Kings viii. 4.

which surrounded the Temple were all considered a part of it. On the eastern side of the rocky platform, which had been Araunah's threshing-floor, rose a colonnade to which the name of "Solomon's Porch"¹ was given, a name which still clung to the spot many long years afterwards. Within this was the outer court, where it is thought by some that trees were planted, those "green olive trees"² which are spoken of as being in "the house of God." This court was open to all; but within was a smaller one, the court of the priests, which was surrounded by chambers, where they lived. Here stood the great altar of burnt-offering, where the sacrifices were offered; and within this court were the great brazen sea, and ten lesser vessels for washing. On the western side of this inner court, facing the east, rose the Temple itself. It had in the front a lofty porch, in which respect it differed from the arrangements of the tabernacle. The space in front of the porch, between it and the great altar, was deemed especially sacred to the priests.³ The building erected was not so high as the porch itself, and had a sloping tent-like roof resembling the tabernacle. Underneath the porch stood two pillars, called Jachin and Boaz. Within it a pair of folding-doors led into the Holy Place. Ten seven-branched candlesticks (instead of one) stood on tables within the Holy Place; here also was the table for the shewbread, and the golden altar of incense. Within this, again, divided from it by folding-doors, over which hung the sacred veil, was the Holy of Holies, into which none but the high-priest penetrated, and he only once a year. Into this inmost chamber the ark was now brought, the staves that bore it being withdrawn

¹ John x. 23; Acts iii. 11² Psa. lii. 8.³ Joel ii. 17.

in token that it had found its resting-place. There was nothing in the ark, we are told, but the two tables of stone which Moses had put there;¹ the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks indeed also of the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod,² but these must either have been destroyed during the time that the Philistines had possession of the ark or were placed elsewhere by Solomon.

While the priests bore the ark into the Holy of Holies, the king and the people waited outside, in the inner court, where was a brazen scaffold erected for the king. The priests returned, and joined by the Levities and the singers, raised the strain so familiar in Israel,—“He is good, His mercy endureth for ever.” At that moment the bright cloud, the sign and pledge of God's immediate presence, that cloud which had rested on and filled the tabernacle when first it was reared up by Moses,³ appeared and filled the newly completed house. And then the king commenced that solemn prayer which has ever since seemed the most appropriate that can be used on any similar occasion in the Christian Church. The king himself was the chief minister of this service, and this fact suggests to us how highly his office was esteemed both by himself and by his people. It was the king who blessed the people, and the king who prayed, though he did not usurp the priest's office and enter the Holy of Holies. The most sublime thoughts were in his mind: thankfulness that he had finished this his special work, remembrance of that promise made by God concerning David's son, desire that it might be fulfilled to the utmost in himself, and, rarest and most sublime of all,

¹ 1 Kings viii. 9.

² Heb. ix. 4.

³ Exod. xl. 34.

a full recognition that the presence of Jehovah could not be bounded by space, that God could be in this house that He had built and everywhere besides. "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" "The most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." The thought was the same, whether expressed by the great king of Israel on his day of triumph or uttered by the first Christian martyr immediately before his death.¹

Seven distinct petitions followed these words, all of which had reference to the Temple. These were, first, for the protection of the sacredness of oaths; second, for deliverance from an enemy on confession of sin; third, for deliverance from drought; fourth, for deliverance from plague; fifth, for the development of the knowledge of God among strangers; sixth, for success against an enemy; seventh, a special prayer for captives. The fifth of these petitions shews strikingly Solomon's feeling for strangers, the seventh almost appears to prophesy the future captivity of his own nation.

With renewed blessing, words of warning and sacrifices, the service ended, and a feast of fourteen days followed. As the bringing up of the ark to Zion shewed forth the joyfulness of David, so the scene of the dedication of the Temple equally displayed the majesty of Solomon. But great as was the material splendour of the scene, it was outweighed, as has been said, by "the religious grandeur of the hymns and of the prayer; the exalted and rational views of the Divine Nature; the union of a whole people in the adoration

¹ Acts vii. 48.

of the One Great, Incomprehensible, Almighty, Everlasting Creator."¹

The dedication was followed by the next communication which Solomon received from God, in which God's favour was again promised on the same conditions as before.² "If ye shall at all turn from following Me, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, . . ." The words must have sounded strangely at such a time, but the after-history of Solomon sadly recalls them to mind. The Temple, and the various other buildings raised in Jerusalem, the foreign cities built, and the increase of the territory and of the commerce of the Israelites, greatly increased the fame of Solomon. From all surrounding countries visitors came to see his magnificence, and still more to hear his wisdom.³ Among these was the Queen of Sheba,⁴ a princess probably from Arabia; of whom our Blessed Lord remarked that her desire to hear the wisdom of Solomon put to shame the indifference of that generation to whom a greater than Solomon was sent.⁵ The expression used, "She came to prove him with hard questions," means rather she came to propose riddles, or to discuss proverbs with him. For proverbs or parables (for the word is nearly the same) Solomon was especially renowned. We are told that he spake three thousand of them,⁶ of which a large number are preserved to us in the Book of Proverbs. If the Song of Solomon gives us some glimpse of the brightness of his youth, the Book of Proverbs represents to us the practical life of his middle age. And the special char-

¹ DEAN MILMAN'S *History of the Jews*.

³ 1 Kings x. 24.

⁴ 1 Kings x. 1-13.

⁶ 1 Kings iv. 32.

² 1 Kings ix. 1-9.

⁵ Matt. xii. 42.

acteristics of Solomon's wisdom are plainly shewn in it ; no book in the Bible gives a more discriminating, we might almost say, judicial view of human character. Above all, no book so clearly sets forth that vice is folly, and virtue wisdom. The proverbs are as characteristic of the times in which Solomon lived as of his special wisdom. It has been remarked, that if sacred lyrics or psalms are often produced in times of war, only in times of peace will proverbs be written.¹

Had Solomon's reign ended soon after he dedicated the Temple it would have been one of unclouded brightness. But it lasted for forty years, and the latter part was overclouded by the very sins from which we might have expected the king's gift of wisdom would most have protected him. But God's gifts never control the will, and Solomon's will was not one with God's.

Three forms of sin are noticeable in Solomon's last days. His rule began to be oppressive, a "grievous yoke ;"² *second*, the polygamy in which his father had indulged was carried to a far greater extent by Solomon, and he chose his wives from those nations with whom marriage was forbidden by the law ; *thirdly*, and as a direct consequence from such marriages, he allowed the practice of idolatry. We need not suppose that Solomon worshipped false gods himself ; it is enough that on the Mount of Olives, over against the Temple he had built, rose by his permission temples to many false gods, and that while on one side of the deep ravine of the Kedron the praises of Jehovah sounded, on the other were performed the impure rites of heathen

¹ HENGSTENBERG'S *Kingdom of God under the Old Testament*.

² 1 Kings xii. 4.

deities. For the last time in his life Solomon received a direct word from God;¹ but this time not in favour. A judgment resembling that pronounced on Saul was delivered; the kingdom should be rent from Solomon. Yet was not the promise to David forgotten; a remnant should be left to his line for David's sake and for Jerusalem's sake.

It has been remarked that no great prophet is spoken of as living during the reign of Solomon. But the explanation of this seems easy. The king's wondrous gift of wisdom rendered him prophet as well as king to his people; and we see this clearly in the part which he took in the dedication of the Temple and in the messages which he himself received from the Lord, without the interposition of any other prophet. But when he fell, the prophetic gift at once appeared in another, and Ahijah the Shilonite is sent with God's message to Jeroboam.² In the dark years of the close of his reign many adversaries were raised up against Solomon, and internal discontent took the place of the joy and gladness of his early years. Once more the united kingdom was near division; the newly established centre of worship was soon to have rivals. He saw the change and the decay; he knew even into whose hands the power would fall at his death;³ at the age of about fifty-five he appeared old;⁴ all his past life, as he mused over it, seemed, in the bitterness of his heart, to have been failure. He remembered his efforts after knowledge and wisdom, his study of human nature, his great works of building and of planting. His

¹ 1 Kings xi. 11-13.

² 1 Kings xi. 29-39.

³ 1 Kings xi. 40.

⁴ 1 Kings xi. 4. Solomon reigned forty years, and was probably about eighteen at his accession.

glory and honour had been the wonder of the world, yet his own sentence on it was contained in the mournful words, "Vanity of vanities ; all is vanity."¹ Was this sad retrospect cheered by any light ? were the words of his last days, surely among the saddest that ever fell from human lips, a prelude to repentance ? The question cannot be confidently answered : He only to whom the curtain is lifted can tell what the last days and death of the great king were really like, but two passages are left us which afford perhaps a hope that the gloom was lightened at the last. Nehemiah, one of the greater spirits of his nation, in after days expresses thus his judgment : "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things ? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel : nevertheless *even him* did outlandish women cause to sin."² And if the king was thus spoken of so long after, the reason for it may perhaps have been suggested by the words accepted as being the last known to have fallen from him :—

"Fear God, and keep His commandments : for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."³

¹ Eccles. i. 2.² Neh. xiii. 26.³ Eccles. xii. 13, 14.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE portions of the Old Testament to be read with this part of the Manual are ;—the Books of 1 Kings, chapters xii. to the end ; 2 Kings ; 2 Chronicles, chapters x. to the end ; Isaiah, chapters xxxvi—xxxix. ; and Jeremiah, chapters i., xxv., xxxii., xxxiv—xliii., lii.

LESSON I.

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM.

THE great empire which had been consolidated under Solomon was already in danger of falling to pieces at his death. The chief weakness of the Israelites, in a political sense, had been the jealousies of their several tribes. These had never been entirely healed. Ephraim, especially, had always desired to revive the supremacy over the other tribes which she had possessed during the time when Joshua was the leader of the nation and Shiloh its holy place. Judah now possessed that supremacy; the house of David occupied the throne; and Jerusalem had succeeded to the past glories of Shiloh. The personal character and the great successes of David and Solomon had undoubtedly contributed to strengthen their rule. But when Solomon turned from God, and tolerated idolatry, God's blessing was removed from him.

The sacred historian appears to shrink from the contrast between the upstart Jeroboam, the industrious young man who had been made a ruler "over all the charge" of his own tribe of Ephraim, and the majestic Solomon. "Even *he* lifted up his hand against the king."¹ Yet the communication made to Jeroboam by

¹ 1 Kings xi. 26.

the Prophet Ahijah would seem to sanction his rebellion. The young man was apparently only engaged in the work which he had in charge when the prophet met him suddenly in the field, and acted in his own person a parable which his words at the same time clearly explained. The rent garment signified the kingdom rent from the house of David; the ten pieces given to Jeroboam the ten tribes over whom he should rule. A promise was moreover added concerning Jeroboam's house closely resembling that to David. Three things, however, were expressly declared: that a part should be left to the house of David, that Jerusalem was the city which God had chosen, and that the house of David should not be afflicted for ever.¹ The promise was very decided and clear, but not at all more so than Samuel's promise to David had been. The great difference lay between the two men to whom the promises were given. David, full of faith, was content to wait the Lord's own time; Jeroboam, instead of waiting for the Lord to rend the kingdom, at once "lifted up his hand against the king." This premature attempt at rebellion ended only in failure, and Jeroboam fled for his life to Egypt. Throughout the history of the chosen people, Egypt is always typical of evil, a return to Egypt of a return to sin. It was for the comforts and luxuries of Egypt that the people longed when their faith failed in the wilderness, and so centuries afterwards, when they lost their place and nation, the obstinate turning of a large party among them for help and refuge to Egypt was denounced by the Prophet Jeremiah. To come out of Egypt was to come out from sin. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him,

¹ 1 Kings xi. 29-39.

and called my son out of Egypt," so spoke another prophet, in words which afterwards received a higher signification.¹ The warning conveyed by this typical meaning was doubtless a practical one; it was intended to prevent the Israelites from following the idolatry which they had seen and had even practised in Egypt.² To this land, so full of menace to an Israelite, Jeroboam fled.

Shishak I., who was then the King of Egypt, seems to have received the fugitive, and been throughout his life his friend and ally. The news of Solomon's death brought Jeroboam back to Canaan. We are expressly told that he was sent for; and as he was known to be a fugitive in consequence of his rebellion, this fact makes it clear that the petition which was made to Rehoboam was not made in good faith, but with the intention of exciting a revolt.³ The obstinate and hard character of the new king rendered the success of such a plot easy. Something of the wisdom of Solomon yet lingers about the words of the older counsellors; but it is rejected in favour of that of younger and less worthy favourites; and the opportunity given by this rejection was seized at once by the malcontents for a general rebellion. The breach was further widened by bitter taunting words, and by the murder of the king's messenger Adoram, who as tax-collector was probably especially odious.

Such a revolt seems strange indeed when we consider the weakness which it caused. It was the ruin of the great and newly formed empire of Israel. The thing however was "from the Lord." He had ordained the division as a deserved judgment for their sin.

¹ Hosea xi. 1; Matt. ii. 15. ² Josh. xxiv. 14. ³ 1 Kings xii. 1-15.

The loss of empire, the narrowing of the dominion of the house of David, the jealousy between the tribes of Ephraim and Judah, and Jeroboam's impatient desire to seize the throne, were but the means by which Jehovah's will was done. God's blessing had been promised to Jeroboam on certain conditions;¹ the same prospect which had been the crowning joy and hope of David's life was opened before him. He did not value it. He had no faith to believe that his house would be made sure by walking in God's ways; his years of exile in Egypt had perhaps effaced this part of the prophet's words from his mind, though he remembered clearly enough the promise of an earthly kingdom. He set himself to make his rule "sure" by following what seemed the dictates of political wisdom, without considering the will of God. Henceforth the Northern Kingdom's history is clearly intended to be a standing warning of the fatal folly of an alliance between religion and worldly wisdom, although for a century or two it may seem to prosper.

Jeroboam restored the city of Shechem, the chief place of the tribe of Ephraim, which possibly had been partly ruined since the time of Abimelech.² By this step he gratified the pride of his own tribe, while he fixed his own residence at Tirzah, which was probably situated in the neighbourhood of Shechem, and was already renowned for its beauty.³ To insure the safety of his trans-Jordanic dominions, he fortified, on the eastern side of the Jordan, Penuel or Peniel, which lay on the caravan route from Damascus to Shechem, and commanded the fords of the river Jabbok. These

¹ 1 Kings xi. 38.

² 1 Kings xii. 25.

³ 1 Kings xiv. 17; Song of Solomon vi. 4.

efforts were made for the defence of his kingdom from outward foes. Other circumstances favoured him: a proposed invasion of his land by Rehoboam was checked by a prophetic message, and the attack made by Shishak, King of Egypt, on Judah (which was possibly made by the suggestion of Jeroboam), aided to render the new kingdom of Israel more secure.¹

But Jeroboam's fear was excited by another and a far more threatening cause. The three great feasts annually held at Jerusalem, at which all males were to present themselves before the Lord, filled him with apprehension. The danger indeed seemed great, that the constant sight of the glorious Temple of Solomon, the participation in its worship, and the listening to the divine psalms of David, should bring back the heart of the people to the house of David. True, the Lord had promised to make Jeroboam "a sure house," but he could not rest on that promise; and, as before he had striven to open a way to the throne in anticipation of the right time, so now he devised a plan of his own to ward off the threatened danger. Ahijah had expressly told him that Jerusalem was the city which God had chosen to put His name there,² but Jeroboam cared not for the prophet's words. Appealing to the love of ease and convenience of the people, he told them that it was too much for them to go so far as to Jerusalem, and provided them with two other sanctuaries. These were conveniently situated, the one in the extreme north of the country at Dan, and the other at Bethel, which lay very near the border of the kingdom of Judah, and would almost seem to intercept any one

¹ 1 Kings xii. 21-24, xiv. 25, 26.

² 1 Kings xi. 36.

travelling to Jerusalem, and to place itself with its new form of worship in their way.

But it was not only the place of worship which Jeroboam altered; he still kept the feasts, but changed their times from those ordained by God to others "devised out of his own heart."¹ These changes were undoubtedly made with the distinct intention of dividing the Church of the Israelites as the kingdom had been divided. It was another way of separating from the rival and hated tribe of Judah; and that this was the intention is clear from the fact that Jeroboam did not endeavour to make either Shiloh, the old place of worship, or Bethel his new sanctuary, a centre for all the people of God whether of Israel or Judah. He was desirous rather that the tribe of Judah should worship at Jerusalem, and the rest of the tribes elsewhere.

His next and greatest change is harder to explain; he probably however felt the difficulty of imparting any feeling of sanctity to his new places of worship which should render them successful rivals to the Temple, where rested the Ark of God, which, from the days of the wanderings, had always been to the people the symbol of the Divine presence. To meet this difficulty Jeroboam devised the plan of giving a material form to the worship which was to be conducted at Dan and Bethel. Two golden calves, one for each sanctuary, were made at his command, and erected as figures of Jehovah. In doing this he was not breaking the first commandment and falling into idolatry, but he was breaking the second, which forbade any graven image, any likeness intended as a representation of the true God, to be made. This is plain from the

¹ 1 Kings xii. 33.

words he used with regard to them: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." They are almost the same words as those used by Aaron when he made for the people the molten calf at Horeb.¹ In both cases the rebellion was not so much against Jehovah as God, as it was against the effort of faith required to realize and trust in the presence of an unseen God.

The actual form of a calf, which was the one adopted in both cases, was probably suggested by the figures of the bull Apis or Mnevis which were worshipped in Egypt. We may here trace a parallel between Aaron and Jeroboam. Both had lately come from Egypt, and when they wanted a figure to embody their ideas of the Godhead it was natural that they should select one which they had often seen worshipped. These sins of Jeroboam, the change of the place of worship, of the times of the feasts, and the raising up a carved figure to represent the invisible God, turned away from him the hearts of the Levites. They probably refused to minister at his new sanctuaries, and he in consequence deposed them from the office to which God had appointed them, and chose priests from any other tribe without regard to the Divine ordinance. The immediate result was the emigration of the true priests and Levites and of the better spirits from the other tribes into the kingdom of Judah.²

¹ 1 Kings xii. 28; Exod. xxxii. 4. Compare John iv. 24.

² 2 Chron. xi. 13-16.

LESSON II.

THE MAN OF GOD FROM JUDAH—THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF OMRI.

THE loss of so many, who refused to join in his religious changes and fled to Judah, rendered it still more necessary for Jeroboam to attach all who remained to his new forms of worship. To this end he seems to have resolved to render them as attractive as possible, and to consecrate the sanctuary at Bethel with especial pomp. The scene reads like a sad and miserable imitation of the great dedication of the Temple by Solomon. The same Feast, that of Tabernacles, was chosen for the ceremony, only at the new time devised by Jeroboam. Instead of the priests and Levites singing the Psalms of David, the new priesthood stood around, selected from any tribe by the will of the new sovereign; instead of the grand thought of Solomon that even his house that he had built could not contain the omnipresent Jehovah, the golden calf was reared up as an image and representation of the true God. The king, in imitation of Solomon, himself offered upon the altar and burnt incense.¹ In the midst of this scene, on the very day which Jeroboam doubtless thought would secure the kingdom to him

¹ 1 Kings xii. 32, 33.

The Man of God from Judah.

and his for ever, came the voice of God's prophet against him. One brave servant of God had come from Judah to raise his voice against the impious effort. Not to the unrighteous king or to the intruding priesthood did he appeal, but he lifted up his voice against the altar that they had made, and denounced a terrible woe against those who should serve at it. The king's attempt to seize God's prophet resulted in the paralyzing of the hand he raised against him; his subsequent endeavour to induce the prophet to go home with him and accept his rewards was most probably made in the hope of gaining him over to his own side.

Proof against the king's overtures to him, the prophet fell under the more subtle temptation offered through the deceit of the old prophet who lived at Bethel. Weary and hungry, parched with thirst and footsore, we can picture easily to ourselves the depression felt by the man of God as he took a short time of rest under an oak. His courage had been maintained when, standing before the king, he denounced his worship and his new priesthood; it failed when, all excitement removed, he was left alone to bear the weariness of the journey and the isolation of his position. The old prophet offered him the things he most needed, refreshment and sympathy; he yielded to the persuasion, and suffered himself to believe that which he wished to believe, namely, that the message came from God. For this compliance he died.

The old prophet of Bethel had doubtless also his temptation to act as he did. He had not been of the number of those who, in horror at the impiety of Jeroboam, had fled the country and sought refuge in

Judah. He had been content to remain at Bethel, but it may well be that the prophetic gift he had really possessed was growing weak and dim in him, and that with it he was losing the respect and reverence of the people round him. Now at the moment when all were revering the unknown prophet from Judah, he sought to claim fellowship with him, and to exhibit to all the spectacle of the influence which one prophet might have over another. He was willing, for this end, to profane the gift given him, to sacrifice honour and honesty to worldly expediency. He saw the due punishment of his sin executed upon another, and appears to have truly sorrowed when the death of the younger prophet followed so closely on the success of his own deceitful persuasions.

But if we can trace, in the act of the old prophet, a willingness to exalt success in this world above obedience to God's will, how much more plainly does the same sin shew itself in the life of the first king who was chosen by the ten tribes. Throughout his life he sacrificed the true service of God to what appeared to him to be worldly wisdom. He sought to obtain the throne without waiting for God's time ; he changed the most solemn ordinances of God, to prevent his people from being as he feared turned from him ; he strove to give a majesty to his new ritual by sacrificing at last the worship of God as Invisible. A certain success did follow his arrangements ; he effectually prevented his people from going to Jerusalem, and broke down their lingering love and respect for God's Temple. But the loss was greater than the gain. In the case of Jeroboam, as well as in that of the old prophet of Bethel, the punishment fell at first on another. But that other

was in the king's case his own much-loved child. When his son fell sick, the king in his anxiety bethought him of that prophet, neglected during the days of prosperity, who, grown old and blind, still lived at Shiloh.¹ He had told Jeroboam that he should be king; but with that misconception of the prophetic power which results from want of faith, the king believes that Ahijah will prophesy according to his own will, and that being no longer friendly to him, he will doom the child to death if he knows who is its father. Where true faith fails superstition will ever assert its sway. Jeroboam, who has presumed to alter God's ordinances, to set aside His priests, and to neglect His prophets, yet believes that the aged Ahijah may exercise some spell over his child; and makes his wife disguise herself in the hope of obtaining a favourable answer, while he deceives the prophet of God. The light of God's revelation soon penetrated the attempted disguise. A terrible judgment followed. The child in whom alone some good thing was found was to die; the house of Jeroboam, which might have been "sure" even as David's, was cast off; not one of his family should come to the grave in peace. Even here the doom did not end. The people had followed Jeroboam's evil leading; and now for the first time the Lord declared that He would root up Israel out of the good land, and scatter them beyond the river.² For two-and-twenty years Jeroboam reigned; he warred with the kingdom of Judah, but his later wars were unsuccessful.³ The manner of his death is not known, but we are told "the Lord struck him, and he died." Thus he who in the commencement of his life seemed

¹ 1 Kings xiv.² 1 Kings xiv. 15, 16.³ 2 Chron. xiii. 13-20.

to have as bright a prospect even as David, the sweet Psalmist and the darling of Israel, earned for himself from future ages the terrible designation, "Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin."

A period of change and war followed upon the death of Jeroboam. His son Nadab, after a short and evil reign of two years, was put to death by Baasha the son of Ahijah, a man of the tribe of Issachar.¹ This occurred while Nadab and his army were besieging Gibbethon, a long siege which appears to have lasted for twenty-seven years.² Baasha fulfilled the judgment of God in slaying all that were left of Jeroboam's family at the same time as he put Nadab to death. He fulfilled God's judgment, but he had no commission to take the fulfilment on himself; his own ambition alone prompted him to commit these murders, and therefore his cruelty as well as his continuance of the calf-worship were reckoned as the sins for which he was punished.

Doubtless by this time the aged Prophet Ahijah of Shiloh was dead, but another prophet, Jehu the son of Hanani, though he seems to have lived at Jerusalem and been a prophet more especially for Judah, was sent to declare the sentence on Baasha and his house. The awful sentence pronounced on the dynasty of Jeroboam is passed on the house of Baasha, and becomes in fact the formula by which God's judgment is constantly declared. "Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat."³ The sentence was literally fulfilled. Baasha reigned for twenty-four years, but his miserable son Elah was

¹ 1 Kings xv. 25-30.

² Cp. 1 Kings xv. 27, 28; xvi. 15-17.

³ 1 Kings xvi. 1-4, 7.

killed in a drunken revel at Tirzah by Zimri, the captain of his chariots, who again exterminated the whole family as Baasha had done that of Jeroboam.¹

Zimri's own fate became a proverb in after days; the last words of Jezebel spoken in defiance of Jehu were, "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?"² Certainly he had no peace. For one short week he reigned; then besieged in Tirzah by Omri, who had with him the army from the siege of Gibbethon, he shut himself within the palace, and setting fire to it, destroyed himself and the beautiful house which had been hitherto the chief residence of the kings of Israel.³

Omri, after some difficulty, succeeded in gaining the throne; he founded a dynasty which lasted throughout four reigns, his own, that of his son Ahab, and those of Ahab's two sons Ahaziah and Jehoram. Though Omri lived at first at Tirzah, he soon built for himself a new residence and a royal capital; this was Samaria, which is from henceforth the chief city of the kingdom of Israel.⁴ The researches made in recent days among the ancient Assyrian inscriptions have brought to light one in which Samaria is called "the city or house of Omri."

Throughout this unsettled period all the kings who have reigned are spoken of by the sacred writer as having followed the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that is, they acquiesced in his new and unauthorized forms of worship, especially in that one which presented the material form of a calf as a representation of the Invisible God.

A new form of sin, however, began with the dynasty

¹ 1 Kings xvi. 8-14.

² 2 Kings ix. 31.

³ 1 Kings xvi. 18, 19.

⁴ 1 Kings xvi. 24.

of Omri; not only the second but also the first commandment was broken, not a figure of the true God, but several false gods were now offered for the adoration and worship of the children of Israel. This sin of yet deeper dye than what had gone before was commenced by Omri. "He did worse than all that were before him;"¹ and in the very last days of the kingdom of Israel the prophet Micah names "the keeping of the statutes of Omri" as one of the chief causes of the coming desolation.²

It was however in the next reign, that of Omri's son Ahab, that the great development of idolatry took place. It has been the custom with some writers to excuse the deeds of Ahab, and lay them entirely at the door of his wife Jezebel. Without doubt she influenced him to evil. Far stronger and more determined than her husband, all the chief acts of his reign seem to have been prompted by her. Yet it should not be forgotten that her father was the king of the Zidonians, and also, as history tells us, himself a priest of Baal. Jezebel, belonging thus to the Canaanitish people, was zealous for the worship of her country's gods, and utterly unscrupulous as to the modes of establishing it. Ahab, on the other hand, belonged to God's own people Israel, and was therefore in no ignorance of the truth. He and he only was the true troubler of Israel; there is a burning indignation in the words of the writer of the Book of Kings. "As if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, . . . he took to wife Jezebel, . . . and went and served Baal." His choice of Jezebel was an evil choice, but yet more detestable was the mode in which he was quite content

¹ 1 Kings xvi. 25.

² Micah vi. 16.

that the crowning ill deed of his life should seem to be done by her agency. Such so-called weakness is in fact the greatest of crimes. Ahab was perfectly willing that evil should be done, and that he himself should reap the advantage of it, but he wished to be "innocent of the knowledge" until he could "applaud the deed."

LESSON III.

THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

UNDER the rule of Ahab and Jezebel a new system, that of persecution, was commenced. Solomon had *permitted* idolatry, Ahab and Jezebel wished to *compel* it. *In this they were to a great extent successful. The worship of Baal and of Ashtoreth was established. Baal, or the Sun-god, was served by four hundred and fifty prophets, while to Ashtoreth, the Moon-goddess, there belonged four hundred prophets, who were under the especial protection of the queen and received their meat from her table.¹ Jezebel, with the full concurrence of a majority of the people, slew the true prophets of the Lord with the sword, and overthrew the altars raised to Jehovah.² Some yet remained faithful in heart, but they were forced to conceal themselves,³ and through all the land not one prophet openly professed the service of God; and if the prophets failed the case of the people must have been evil indeed, for since the days of Jeroboam there had been no true priests in Israel.

Such was the condition of the kingdom of Israel, when one wild form stood up to confront the idolatrous and

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 19.

² 1 Kings xviii. 4, xix. 10.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 4, 13.

luxurious court, one voice was lifted to proclaim the unwelcome truth. Since the days of Jephthah, "the warrior Gileadite," we have heard little of the country east of the Jordan; but the greatest prophet of this time, Elijah the Tishbite, came from Gilead to denounce the sins of Israel, and in his wild manner of life is displayed the character of the land from whence he came. His rough mantle and his girdle of leather, his long hair, his sudden appearances and disappearances, his rapid running,¹ all speak of a mode of life induced by residence in a wild half-civilized country, and contrast strongly with the luxury of the court, where undoubtedly Tyrian refinements had been introduced with Tyrian worship.² Suddenly the prophet is commissioned to foretell a terrible drought which should come upon the land.³ Elijah, we are told by St. James, "prayed earnestly that it might not rain."⁴ This prayer was undoubtedly made in the hope that the suffering might bring the king and people to repent of their sins; yet when the prayer was granted, the drought was the act of God, not of His prophet. It was the continual error of Ahab to look upon all such acts as the doings of the prophets alone, and to forget or refuse to see the hand of God in them.

Protected miraculously by God for some time both from the drought and from the anger of the court, Elijah travels at length, at the command of God, beyond the bounds of the kingdom of Israel to Zarephath, a town in that very kingdom of Zidon from which the persecuting Jezebel had come. The choice of his place of refuge seems strange. The widow to

¹ 2 Kings i. 8; 1 Kings xviii. 12, 46.

² 1 Kings xxii. 39.

³ 1 Kings xvii. 1.

⁴ James v. 17.

whom he was sent could speak but of "the Lord *thy* God,"¹ for she was not one of the children who could sit "even at the master's table." Yet as the dogs desire even the crumbs which fall from that table, so did she desire to do one act of womanly kindness and pity before her death, which she believed to be approaching.² Her rewards were great and many, a miraculous provision of food, the restoration of her son from death to life, and a knowledge of the true God.³ To all ages she is the type of those who, having but little, strive to do their utmost with that little, and therefore receive more. "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, . . . but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow."⁴

In this event of his life, Elijah's mission seems for one moment to anticipate the time when Gentile as well as Jew should be called into God's Church. That time had not yet however come. Back to the land of Israel the prophet is sent, to meet at the risk of his life the king who chose to attribute to him all the sufferings of the people. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" are Ahab's first words; yet when met by the unshrinking reply, and the sudden demand of Elijah to be confronted with the false prophets of Baal and of the grove, he dares not resist, but obeys at once. It is the beginning of the victory of the one true and brave servant of God against the many and the powerful in Israel.

Two reasons probably prompted the choice of Mount Carmel as the scene of trial; there was at that place a

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 12.

² 1 Kings xvii. 11-15.

³ 1 Kings xvii. 16, 23, 24.

⁴ Luke iv. 25, 26.

never-failing fountain which even in this time of drought would supply the water needed, and there also was one of those ruined altars, erected originally to Jehovah, but broken down now by the command of the rulers.¹ The scene that ensued is well known to us: constantly read as a Sunday Lesson of our Church, in recent days it has been realized more thoroughly by many by the help of the wondrous music in which it has been expressed by Mendelssohn. The wild excitement, the leaping on the altar, the self-torture of the false prophets, strongly resemble the acts which may at this present day be seen among the Eastern devotees. All day they cried to Baal. Their numbers were many; against them stood but one who dared to maintain openly his trust in Jehovah. And when their efforts proved vain, his first act was one that should remind the people of that ancient unity which they had broken, and of that worship which they had cast off.

Elijah did not raise a new altar, but repaired the old one, and built it with "twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob."² Recalling thus the old unity of the twelve tribes, he addressed his prayer to the God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel, the common ancestors of all. His prayer was heard, and the descent of fire from heaven attested to all the power of Jehovah. The vengeance on the false prophets of Baal which followed was in strict accordance with the Mosaic law, that idolatrous Israelites should die.³ These false prophets were not foreigners, but belonged to the chosen nation, and had turned from the worship of Jehovah to that of Baal. And now, when once more the people had proclaimed Jehovah

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 30.² 1 Kings xviii. 31.³ Deut. xvii. 2-7.

to be God, the curse of drought is removed. While Ahab feasts Elijah prays;¹ once more his prayer is heard, and Ahab needed to drive quickly, lest with the torrent of rain which now fell the stream of the Kishon should overflow its banks and prevent him from reaching his palace at Jezreel. The distance was about sixteen miles, and Elijah, hardy and fleet of foot, ran before the chariot. He shewed his willingness thus to recognise the king as his sovereign now that he had turned from his idolatry. Ahab had now before him one of those possibilities of choice of good or evil which God so often offers to man. He chose the evil. It was not to the prophet of God but to his wife that he turned for counsel. He told her all, and we cannot doubt that the threatening message which she at once sent to Elijah was sent with his knowledge.

Once more a fugitive, the prophet "arose, and went for his life."² One day's journey more he went before he rested, and then first it would seem, worn out with toil, oppressed with loneliness and disappointment, the brave spirit of the prophet failed him. He had thought that his exile was over, that the worship of Baal and the power of the Baal-worshippers was at an end, that Jehovah would now be loved and served. It was the mistake so often made since by men, so distinctly contradicted by Christ, when He taught that signs and wonders however great would not suffice to create faith. But to Elijah at that moment his whole life seemed a mistake, and he requested for himself that he might

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 42; James v. 17, 18.

² The incidental notice that Beersheba, to which he fled, belonged to Judah, shews us that by this time the portion of the tribe of Simeon (in which Beersheba was situated) was reckoned to the kingdom of Judah.

die. "It is enough," he said. "Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." The depression, the sense of loneliness, continued with him, though he was refreshed by heavenly food and the ministry of an angel. May we not say that such depression as that is never cured even by angel ministrations, but is removed only by "the still small voice" of God? It was so with Elijah. Standing on the holy mount of Sinai, where the great lawgiver had prayed for the people and been strengthened by the vision of the presence of God,¹ Elijah uttered again his complaints before God. He had been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, but all was useless, and from the depth of his heart came up the cry of loneliness, "I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away." The wind, the earthquake and the fire brought no answer, but in the still small voice God spoke to the lonely, fainting heart of his servant. A new commission is given to him. Both for Syria and for Israel there shall arise new kings, and he shall further anoint Elisha to be prophet. The words "in thy room" seem to imply that the prayer "now take away my life" would before long be granted. Meanwhile Elijah is to have the love and companionship of a faithful follower throughout the rest of his life, and is further comforted by the assurance that, unknown to him, there were yet seven thousand faithful ones left in Israel. Once more revived in spirit, Elijah at once departed, and called Elisha by the significant act of throwing his mantle upon him. No longer alone, he is now ministered to by one who termed him father, and was to him as a son.

¹ Exod. xxxii. 30-32, xxxiii. 18-23.

Since the great day on Mount Carmel, Elijah had disappeared from the kingdom of Israel. The queen's threatened vengeance had succeeded for a time in banishing him. Meanwhile other events had happened, other prophets (some perhaps of those concealed by Obadiah¹) had spoken to Ahab. Ben-hadad, the King of Syria, had twice invaded Israel from Damascus. The first siege of Samaria took place now, and ended, when the Syrians were most confident of success, in their defeat. Ahab's victory was foretold by a prophet, who also warned him that a second invasion would take place next year. Once more Ahab's success is foretold, and the event rapidly follows on the prophecy. This activity of the prophets shews that the great day on Mount Carmel had produced its effect. They are no longer persecuted, but speak boldly before the king. Ahab was victorious, but he failed to execute God's judgment on Ben-hadad. The message brought to him by one of the "sons of the prophets"² shews that the king of Syria was "appointed to utter destruction," and Ahab sinned therefore, as Saul had sinned before, in sparing his life. For this, the first prophecy of Ahab's approaching death is pronounced. Ahab went to Samaria, "heavy and displeased,"³ but not repentant. With an effort perhaps to drive the terrible prediction from his mind, he set about improving his favourite palace at Jezreel.

Then followed the covetous desire for the vineyard hard by, which Naboth, with probably a religious scruple, refused to give up. Once more the king is "heavy and displeased;" he has perhaps some fear of

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 4, xx. 13, 22, 35.

² 1 Kings xx. 38-43.

³ 1 Kings xx. 43.

the prophet who has foretold his death, or of Micaiah, of whom he afterwards said that he always prophesied evil concerning him.¹ In Jezebel his hesitation and his childish fretfulness only excite scorn. "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?" she asks, and without hesitation orders the murder, under the forms of justice, which Ahab in his secret heart was desiring. At once, when the murder is accomplished, Ahab goes to take possession of the vineyard. All his life he treated the prophets as necromancers, who could bring about their own wishes through enchantment, rather than as servants of God. Doubtless he thought that the judicial forms used would blind the eyes of all those who might "prophesy evil." With his two captains, Jehu and Bidkar, behind him, he rode down the valley of Jezreel, and entered the vineyard of the murdered man. There, as he entered it, stood the prophet of God, with the avenging message. The words point at once to the true murderer: "Hast *thou* killed, and also taken possession?" Ahab and Elijah had not met since the great trial on Mount Carmel. Ahab had named Elijah then as "he that troubleth Israel;" now, terror-stricken, he can only utter the words, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

Then follows the terrible sentence, so strongly resembling those before denounced against Jeroboam and Baasha. Ahab's repentance seems to have been caused by his fear. God in His mercy accepted it. He saw that it was, for at least a time, real, and He spared him from the evil in his days; yet the repentance was short-lived. Not fully three years after² the last war with Ben-hadad, Ahab is again preparing

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 8.

² 1 Kings xxii. 2.

to go against the Syrians. For the first time we find Judah and Israel in league. Jehoshaphat and Ahab have joined their son and daughter in marriage, and now together they will take Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians. The remarkable account given us of this event can be best understood, if we remember that all Ahab's prophets were most probably attached to the calf-worship which since the time of Jeroboam had existed in Israel. Thus, though they were prophets of Jehovah, they were suspected by Jehoshaphat, and were given over by the Lord to believe and to declare a lie. The one true prophet, Micaiah, hated by Ahab and scoffed at by the other prophets, is disregarded; but the arrow shot at a venture fulfilled his true message, and in the circumstances of Ahab's death Elijah's former prediction begins to be accomplished.¹

Ahab was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who during his two years of rule continued both Jeroboam's sin of the calf-worship and Ahab's yet more open apostasy in the worship of Baal. At last, in his sickness, the king sent to the shrine of the Philistine god Baal-zebub to inquire of his recovery. This practical denial of the true God was a public act, an open casting off of God. As the messengers went, they were met by one who had again for some time been apparently unseen. Once more Elijah the prophet denounces the miserable idolatry. "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel?" he asks, and he answers the king's question with a message of death.² Not only did the king's death follow soon, but a more immediate destruction, the death by fire of those sent to seize the prophet, manifested the power of Jehovah.

¹ 1 Kings xxi. 19, xxii. 37, 38.

² 2 Kings i.

Elijah desired that the fire might fall, and God's truth be shewn. It was the sharp and sudden judgment so often to be met with under the elder dispensation, and the desire is fully justified therefore in Elijah's case. But the wish to wield again the terrors of the law felt by those who were to live under the Christian dispensation was expressly rebuked by our Lord, when the "sons of thunder," in their zeal for Him, asked if they should not imitate Elijah.¹

It is the last recorded act of the great prophet on earth. The wondrous end was near. From Bethel to Jericho, from Jericho to Jordan, the faithful Elisha followed his master, answering all who would foretell the approaching separation with the stern, sad words, "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace."² It was on the eastern side of Jordan, his own Gilead, that the great prophet vanished from the sight of his loving companion. There, parted from all human companionship by fire, Elijah was at length released from the heavy burden of denouncing God's judgments. It was the last time he was seen by Elisha, but not the last time he was seen by mortal man. All conflict over, all work finished, once again was the prophet seen, when, on the mountain, he conversed with the great lawgiver, and with the Lord of life, and spoke of that death of the deathless One which should give life to all.³ Into that blissful communion revealed to the three Apostles Elijah was withdrawn. In vain did the sons of the prophets search for his body,⁴ and for long did his nation expect his reappearance. The last words on their roll of prophecy spoke of it;⁵ and those words were repeated by the

¹ Luke ix. 54.² 2 Kings ii. 3, 5.³ Luke ix. 30, 31.⁴ 2 Kings ii. 16-18.⁵ Mal. iv. 5, 6; Luke i. 17.

angel who announced the approaching birth of John the Baptist. "In the spirit and power of Elias," the forerunner of the Lord came, and so closely did he resemble the former prophet, that when the Saviour said "that Elias is come already, and they knew him not," "the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist."¹

¹ Matt. xvii. 12, 13.

LESSON IV.

THE LIFE OF ELISHA.

WHEN Elisha returned back alone to the western side of Jordan, after witnessing the departure of Elijah, his first act proclaimed him the true successor of the great prophet. He had asked that the spirit of Elijah might rest on him. He had desired to receive more than those gifts which were shared by other "sons of the prophets," and to be Elijah's first-born spiritual son.¹ He stood to Elijah in the same relation as Joshua had done to Moses. He had "poured water on the hands of Elijah;"² that is, he had ministered to him as Joshua had ministered to Moses, and now, with the same power as Elijah, Elisha also smote the waters, and they parted.

But although Elisha was to continue the work of Elijah, yet that work was greatly changed, and therefore the man, God's instrument to do the work, was thoroughly different from his predecessor. Not from the wild land of Gilead, but from Abel-Meholah, or "the meadow of the dance," a pasture-land lying in the

¹ The "double portion" asked for by Elisha (2 Kings ii. 9) does not denote twice as much as that possessed by Elijah, but the portion of a first-born son—double that of other sons. Compare Deut. xxi. 17.

² 2 Kings iii. 11.

rich Jordan valley, had Elisha been called.¹ From his twelve yoke of oxen, he had been summoned to plough in the spiritual field of the twelve tribes of Israel. In appearance the two prophets formed a striking contrast; the hair which Elijah had worn long was closely cut with Elisha; the rough mantle of his master was apparently never worn by the younger prophet, who carried a staff in his hand.² And the message given to the two prophets differed still more than their mode of life and appearance. Elijah had to break down the worship of Baal, and was emphatically a reformer. Elisha's work was to keep the people in the knowledge of God, and shew through miracles of healing and acts of kindness the tender mercies of Jehovah. To Jericho, so lately rebuilt, Elisha returned, and joined himself for a time to the college of prophets established there. The situation, as the inhabitants of the city truly said, was pleasant. It is pleasant still; travellers speak of it as one of the most verdant and beautiful spots in Palestine. But one at least of its two bright streams of water was in those days bitter and brackish, unfit for drinking and prejudicial to the land. This was now healed by the power given to Elisha.

But Elisha could not remain peacefully living in the college of prophets at Jericho. From the time of the ascent of Elijah to his own death, a long period of at least fifty-five years, he was to be the great prophet to Israel, the leading man of his nation. From Jericho he travelled to Bethel, the chief seat of the calf-worship established by Jeroboam. That worship still continued; no return to a purer or more spiritual form

¹ 1 Kings xix. 16, 19.

² 2 Kings ii. 23, iv. 29.

had taken place. The present king, Jehoram, the second of Ahab's sons who had ascended the throne, though he had put away the image of Baal, "cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam;"¹ and Bethel, known as "the king's chapel," and "the king's court,"² had probably been much enriched by the worshippers attracted there. The coming of the true prophet of Jehovah to such a town would probably be most unwelcome to the inhabitants. Accordingly we find the children of the place, incited doubtless by their parents, coming forth to meet the prophet and insult him on his entrance.³ The wooded hill which still overlooks the road to Bethel was then the haunt of savage animals. Two bears issuing from this wood, attacked the children who had scoffed at Jehovah's prophet. That so terrible a judgment should fall on the children of the idolaters of Bethel need not surprise us; it is part of God's discipline thus to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. In cursing the children, Elisha was but imitating the act of Elijah in calling down fire upon the captains and their fifties. Of both prophets it may be said, that they, living under the older dispensation and not under Christ's law of love, knew not as yet of what manner of spirit God would have them be.

From Bethel Elisha visited Mount Carmel, and from thence came to Samaria. He found the capital in all the movement and excitement induced by an approaching campaign. The king, Jehoram, was about to take the field against the Moabites. These people, who inhabited the country south of Gilead and Bashan, and who claimed all the land east of Jordan which had been theirs before the Amorites took it from them,

¹ 2 Kings iii. 2, 3.² Amos vii. 13.³ 2 Kings ii. 23, 24.

had always been troublesome neighbours to the Israelites. Balak, King of the Moabites, by enchantments and by the word of Balaam, had sought to bring evil on God's people; Eglon, another Moabite king, had invaded and oppressed the people until slain by Ehud, but Jephthah had overthrown them, and David had completed the conquest. The recent most interesting discovery of an engraved stone or monument in the land of Moab enables us to complete the notices given to us in Holy Scripture. It appears that the Moabites had successfully thrown off the Israelitish yoke, probably in the time of Jeroboam, but that it had been re-imposed on them by Omri. Conquered then, Mesha, their king, was compelled to pay an enormous tribute in wool.¹ He seized however the opportunity afforded by the death of Ahab and the illness of his son Ahaziah to rebel.² His successful wars are commemorated on the stone lately found, on which he gives the praise to Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and exults in his victories over the house of Omri.

Mesha was too dangerous a neighbour for Jehoram, who allied himself with Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah, and with the King of Edom, and marched into Moab by the long and most difficult route south of the Dead Sea, a route which he adopted probably in order the better to surprise the Moabites. Secretly, without the king's knowledge, Elisha accompanied the army. But he was known to some in the host as "a prophet of Jehovah," and when the sore need of water came upon them, the three kings hearing of him "went down to him."³ It is the first occasion on which we find Elisha

¹ 2 Kings iii. 4; Isa. xvi. 1.

² 2 Kings i. 1, iii. 5.

³ 2 Kings iii. 12.

brought into immediate contact with one of the doomed and guilty house of Ahab. His words were not less stern than those of Elijah to Jehoram's father. "What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father and to the prophets of thy mother." This speech indicates what the subsequent history tells us more clearly, that the prophets and priests of Baal were still numerous at Samaria, and that Jezebel, the king's mother, still lived to protect them.¹ For Jehoshaphat's sake, however, the prophet promised an answer, but he added to Jehoram, "I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." Then as music was played to him, "the hand of the Lord came upon him," and he prophesied of deliverance and victory. All came to pass as he had said; the sudden filling of a dry valley with water due to a fall of rain elsewhere (a not uncommon occurrence in that country) refreshed the host; while the Moabites, taking it for blood in the red glow of the sun, were over-confident, and through their imprudence utterly defeated. In his despair, Mesha, the King of Moab, offered up his eldest son as a sacrifice to Chemosh. The horror caused by this event seems to have induced the allied kings to break up the siege they were laying to his last fortress and to depart home. It is possible that it was after this signal deliverance that Jehoram publicly put away the image of Baal: he certainly did not put down the worship of Baal in Samaria, but he seems to have abstained from joining in it himself, and for a time we find Elisha on far more friendly terms with him.

The next events related to us of Elisha shew us something of the domestic life of the period. With the sons of the prophets we see him either at Gilgal presid-

¹ 2 Kings x. 18-28, ix. 22, 30.

ing over their meals, or by the river of Jordan aiding in the building of a new college; he is able to multiply their food, or to give back the axe to him who in his poverty had but a borrowed one to work with; and for the widow of one of them he multiplies the oil.¹ But of these peaceful stories the one which possesses the most tender interest is that of the great lady of Shunem who exercised such loving hospitality to Elisha. It was because she perceived that this was an holy man of God that she so entertained him. Both kindness and faith were mingled in her act. Too great herself to need the prophet's interest with the king, there was but one reward that he could give her. In the birth of her child the Shunammite received the blessing most longed for by every Israelitish wife. The child was evidently yet young when the hopes raised by its birth were beaten down by its death. The mourning mother felt this to be the crowning sorrow, that she had once enjoyed so glorious a hope. "Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, do not deceive me?" were her first words spoken to the prophet himself, after her hasty ride of sixteen or seventeen miles had brought her to Mount Carmel. The scene presents a contrast to that other scene on Mount Carmel, when Elijah had withstood the priests of Baal. Elijah had repaired the ruined altar, and it seems Elisha had celebrated special services there on new moons and sabbaths.² Here the Shunammite knew that she should find him: here he listened to the grief which she refused to pour out to his servant. Gehazi is first mentioned here; the word translated servant³ means

¹ 2 Kings iv. 38-44, vi. 1-7, iv. 1-7.

² 2 Kings iv. 23

³ 2 Kings iv. 12, 25.

"lad" or "youth," and is different from that by which the relation of Elisha to Elijah is expressed. Yet it may be that Gehazi might have been in some sort a successor to Elisha, had his own character been more worthy of such a position. Here we meet him striving to thrust away the mourner from the prophet, and though he bears the prophet's staff it works no miracle in his hands. Elisha, like Elijah, prayed for help, and at their prayer "women received their dead raised to life again."¹

It was probably soon after the raising up of the child that Elisha prophesied of a famine which should last seven years. At his warning the Shunammite and her household took refuge in the land of the Philistines, a country of great productiveness, and where, if food failed, it could be obtained by sea. The prophet himself chose to bear the scarcity in company with the sons of the prophets at Gilgal. There, when in their want they gathered poisonous herbs, he healed them; there offerings of firstfruits were made to him (doubtless because there was no Levitical priesthood to receive them), and there he multiplied the food. The seven years at an end, the Shunammite returned and claimed and received her possessions.²

Through all the land of Israel Elisha had become known for his acts of healing, so that the little Israelitish maid carried off to Damascus by Syrian robbers affirmed confidently that her master, Naaman, would be recovered, could he but be with the prophet in

¹ Heb. xi. 35.

² We must date the events related in 2 Kings viii. 1-6 before those of 2 Kings v., as it seems impossible that Gehazi could have conversed with the king after he became a leper.

Samaria. Naaman, not debarred by his leprosy, as an Israelite would have been, from access to the king, gained his permission to visit Samaria for this purpose, and came to Jehoram, with a present of the riches of Damascus, and a letter, the insolence of which recalls the messages which Ben-hadad had formerly sent to Jehoram's father.¹ Jehoram's faithless terror at the message shews how much the power of Syria began to be dreaded in Israel. Elisha's message to him is full of indignation at his want of faith: "He shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Jehovah's name should be known even among the heathen; and thus, though "many lepers were in Israel," "none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian."² The proud soldier's refusal at first to dip in Jordan, his remembrance of those rivers which still render Damascus most beautiful among the cities of the East, are characteristic of the man, whose gratitude after his cure was as warm as his anger had been before. To Jehovah alone he ascribes the praise, to Him alone will he henceforward give worship; and Elisha permits his attendance on his master in the heathen temple because he will from this time offer nothing himself save to Jehovah.³ The prophet took no reward; he was anxious to shew that the gift of God could not be purchased with money. Not so the prophet's servant, to whom the sparing of "this Syrian" seemed folly. A type of those who have thought that all deceit or evil dealing is justified when used to an unbeliever, Gehazi ran after the departing Gentile, and enriched himself. He received a heavy punishment, and in the prophet's sad

¹ 2 Kings v. 5, 6. Comp. 1 Kings xx. 2-6.

² Luke iv. 27.

³ 2 Kings v. 17-19.

words, "Is it a time to receive money?" we may perceive perhaps an intimation of troubles coming upon his country.

The first of these troubles came from the land of Naaman. Syria warred against Israel, and Elisha, with a more softened feeling towards Jehoram than during the earlier war with Moab, warned him often of the King of Syria's movements. The Syrians, who had heard of the cure of Naaman, detected the secret of their failures; their king therefore attacked Dothan, where the prophet then was. Once more the chariots and horses of fire were seen by Elisha; those sent against him were struck with blindness, and were led by him to Samaria. Jehoram, delighted at the success, would fain have smitten the Syrians, but the humanity of Elisha forbade this. The king, who had just addressed him as "my father," could not instantly disobey him, and they were spared.

This kind treatment prevented the return of the bands of marauders or any other attack on the prophet's life; but the regular army of Syria, with the king at its head, besieged Samaria soon after, and brought on it the greatest sufferings for want of food. The horrors of this siege were a first accomplishment of the woes denounced by Moses on his people if they went after other gods and served not the Lord.¹ The exact accomplishment did not suggest to Jehoram the true reason of these horrors. Persuaded, like his father, that a prophet was a magician, who could bring to pass whatever he wished for, he exclaimed, in words which recall those of his mother to Elijah, that

¹ Comp. 2 Kings vi. 24-29; Deut. xxviii. 52-57.

Elisha should die,¹ and that he would no longer wait for Jehovah, Who had brought the evil upon him.² The rupture between the king and the man of God seems to have been final. To Elisha the words of Jehoram recalled now as before the idolatry and the murders of his parents, and he exclaimed, "See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head?" and though he has afterwards a prediction of good for Samaria, no word of kindness for Jehoram again passes his lips.

The end of the dynasty of Omri was drawing near, and the fourth king of his line was soon to perish. The word of God delivered to Elijah on Horeb was now to be fully accomplished.³ To Damascus Elisha travelled, and there the healer of Naaman and deliverer of the blinded Syrians was received as "the man of God," and consulted by Ben-hadad as to his sickness. The message to him was unfavourable; and as the woes which his captain, Hazael, should inflict on Israel rose to his inward vision the man of God wept. Hazael, though he spoke of himself as no better than a dog, yet accomplished in his own person the message which was terrible alike to the King of Syria and to the land of Israel.

But there was one more anointing to be accomplished, and when Elisha had despatched one of the younger prophets to Jehu at Ramoth-Gilead,⁴ the active part of his career seems to have ended. War with Syria still continued, and Jehoram, striving like his father to recover Ramoth-Gilead, was sorely wounded. While he lay wounded at Jezreel, the ven-

¹ Comp. 2 Kings vi. 31; 1 Kings xix. 2.

² 2 Kings vi. 33.

³ 1 Kings xix. 15, 16.

⁴ 2 Kings ix. 1, 2.

geance of the God he had forgotten came upon him. From the eastern side of Jordan, Jehu, the furious driver, hastened to Jezreel, and there the long-deferred judgment of God was executed. All descended from Ahab were swept away; Jehoram the king, who drove to meet the avenger, was cast dead into that very vineyard which had led his father into such deep guilt; while his mother, the instigator, as it would seem, of both her husband and her children to idolatry and cruelty, met her end at the entering in of Jezreel. Courageous to the last, Jezebel defied Jehu even when powerless to attack him, and died as she had lived, strong and unmoveable. Every person descended from Ahab, whether belonging to the reigning family of Israel or to that of Judah, was put to death by Jehu. His progress was marked in blood. The great men of the kingdom, and the idolatrous priests of Ashtoreth established at Jezreel by Jezebel, fell before him.¹ But the greatest slaughter of all was that by which he destroyed at Samaria not only the temple of Baal, with its priests and prophets, but every worshipper of Baal that could be collected "through all Israel."

The massacres effected in fact a revolution; there was none left to oppose the exaltation of Jehu to the throne, on which his family remained for a longer period than any former dynasty had done. It was a religious as well as a political revolution, for the worship of Baal introduced by the house of Omri was destroyed and never re-established by the new dynasty of Jehu. Again, as in the days of Ahab and Elijah, we perceive a choice offered; Baal-worship swept away, would the reforming instrument of God's vengeance return to the

¹ 2 Kings x. 11.

pure spiritual worship of Jehovah, or to that degraded and idolatrous form established by Jeroboam? Jehu chose the latter, and he and his family cleaved to it always. The choice was fatal to them and to the country over which they reigned. For the measure in which he fulfilled God's commands, Jehu was rewarded by the promise that his children to the fourth generation should ascend the throne.¹ But that terrible vengeance could be justified only by a real and not pretended "zeal for the Lord,"² and when "Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel,"³ "the blood shed according to the righteous judgment of God became sin to *him* who shed it in order to fulfil not the will of God, but his own." Thus in the last days of the rule of Jehu's descendants, we find the Prophet Hosea declaring in God's name, "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel."⁴ Doubtless the blood was to be avenged not because it was shed, but because it was shed uselessly.

Of Elisha we hear nothing through all these terrible scenes. He lived however through the remainder of the twenty-eight years of the reign of Jehu, and the seventeen years of the reign of his son Jehoahaz. He saw the evils which he had prophesied and over which he had wept come to pass; the fierce Hazael had brought on Israel all the horrors which Elisha had shrinkingly foreseen;⁵ the Syrians were everywhere victorious; so that in the times of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, they limited the standing army of Israel at their pleasure.⁶ East of the Jordan Hazael's power was supreme,

¹ 2 Kings x. 30.² 2 Kings x. 16.³ 2 Kings x. 31.⁴ Hosea i. 4.⁵ 2 Kings viii. 12, x. 32, xiii. 3, 4.⁶ 2 Kings xiii. 7.

Gilead and Bashan were smitten, "threshed," as a prophet expressed it, "with threshing instruments of iron."¹ And at this time of lowest depression, the prophet of God, who by his gentle, loving acts had borne witness to the tender mercies of the unseen Ruler, lay on his death-bed and drew near his end. We cannot wonder that the new king, Joash, who had succeeded his father Jehoahaz, should come down and weep over him, repeating again that cry which had escaped from Elisha when his master was taken from him.² One final effort the dying prophet makes for his country. With his hands over the king's, he shoots an arrow of deliverance towards the smitten land of Gilead, an emblematic act which promised some future victory for Israel. Again he urges the king to smite with the arrows on the ground, but he does it with so little energy that the prophet proclaims that 'but three victories will reward his efforts. This gleam of hope in a dark and gloomy period closes the life of Elisha. The kind man of God, who had been the helper of women, the succourer of foreigners and captives, died. But even in death his acts of healing were continued, and one from whom life had departed was raised again at his grave.³ "The Father" of the king and country thus passed away, but his life, with its many stories of personal kindness and goodness, in its mildness and its tolerance supplies a new element in the history and character of his nation; and is in some faint measure a prelude to the life of Him Who "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."⁴

¹ Amos i. 3, 4.² Comp. 2 Kings ii. 12, xiii. 14.³ 2 Kings xiii. 20, 21.⁴ Acts x. 38.

LESSON V.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

THE dying words of Elisha were speedily fulfilled.¹ Joash, the reigning king of Israel, gained three victories over the Syrians, and recovered certain cities (possibly those of Gilead) which they had taken. The death of the great conqueror Hazael, and accession of his son Ben-hadad to the Syrian throne, probably rendered this more easy. But it was not Joash, but his son, Jeroboam II., who was to be the "saviour" of Israel.² The succession of prophets remained unbroken. Elisha had passed away, but another prophet arose in his place. Jonah, son of Amittai, who belonged to Gath-hepher, a village in the land of Zebulon, announced to Israel that the time of their depression was for the present over, and that the new king Jeroboam, namesake to the first founder of the separate Israelite kingdom, would restore the former boundaries of the land.³ A wonderful succession of victories indeed was gained by Jeroboam. Once more Israel possessed Gilead and the disputed land of the Moabites. Their northern border was restored to Hamath,

¹ 2 Kings xiii. 17, 19, 25.

² 2 Kings xiii. 5, xiv. 27.

³ 2 Kings xiv. 25.

and for a time even Damascus, the Syrian capital, was tributary to them. It was a marvellous change, and from a state of constant terror, the Israelites never again had reason to fear the Syrians. But beyond Damascus, in the far east, a greater kingdom was beginning to spread itself westwards; a more terrible enemy threatened to absorb both Syria and Israel, and the Assyrian power, with its great capital Nineveh, in its irresistible might, its boundless resources and marvellous skill, year by year increased the number of its conquests. It was not only the vast numbers which the King of Assyria could bring into the field, or the great progress in all arts whether of war or peace that his people had made, that rendered him formidable to Israel. There was a growing knowledge that it was this nation whom God had chosen to be the scourge and punishment of his people, and that when the struggle between them came the Lord would not fight for Israel but for Assyria. "I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus," said one prophet of this time; and another, when he bewailed the sorrows of his people, said, "They shall eat unclean things in Assyria."¹

Yet, in the midst of these mingled successes and forebodings, God gave to His people a new revelation; even these very oppressors were His people, even to them His mercy might be extended. Elisha's prophecies with regard to Damascus and kindness to Naaman were a commencement of this teaching, as they shewed that to Gentiles also God's messages might be sent. It was rendered far more clear when the prophet who had just foretold the victories of Israel was commanded

¹ Amos v. 27; Hosea ix. 3.

to "go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it."¹ To Jonah it had been revealed that Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was threatened with destruction if it did not turn from its violence and evil way. Doubtless the prophet had rejoiced in the hope of the overthrow of this city which threatened his own so mightily; and now, when desired to travel there and proclaim the coming trouble to its inhabitants, he foresaw that the mercy of God might yet spare them, and that he himself would be the instrument of their repentance and consequent safety. The thought was too hard for him, and while yet in his own country he murmured against it, and sought by flight to escape from the mission. We know the end of that attempt at flight, and are familiar with the marvellous history of the storm, the kindness of the heathen mariners towards the prophet, who has been called "the first Apostle to the Gentiles;" and the type of the resurrection of Christ which followed in the raising of Jonah again from the belly of the fish. Clear-seeing, even when most perverse, the prophet never doubted on whose account the storm had been raised, and in the depth of his trouble his trust in God returned. Not for the golden calves of his own country, but for the pure worship of the Temple his soul yearned, and there he was persuaded that his prayer was heard.² Once more the command came which was to send an Israelitish prophet to warn a Gentile city, and this time it was obeyed. Jonah went to the capital of the much-dreaded Assyrian power. We can picture his entry into it, the contrast it must have presented to any city of his own land; for its size was enormous, its river, the Tigris, far larger

¹ Jonah i. 2.² Jonah ii. 4, 7.

than any river of Palestine ; and though all the splendid palaces which have lately been discovered may not have been erected in Jonah's time, enough was certainly there to give a vast impression of power and skill. And as he entered the city, "everywhere, through corridor, and lane, and square, bazaar and caravanserai, sounded one shrill monotonous cry, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.'"

It is probable that to the Assyrians this period was not one of great success in war. The reigning king was unwarlike, and some of the surrounding nations had for a short time thrown off the yoke of Nineveh. This may have induced the king and his people to listen more readily to the warning voice. They repented, and that so sincerely, that our Saviour, in after years, declared that they had put to shame the unrepentant Jewish nation.¹ The strangers from the covenant of promise repented; the son of the covenant would not repent from his hardness. No pity even for the little children or the dumb cattle touched his heart. "It displeased Jonah exceedingly." He had expected, and had indeed foretold, that the Lord would surely repent, and he himself be made the instrument of salvation to his country's foes. So, like Elijah, in the bitterness of his heart, he requested that he might die, and heedless of the still small voice that spoke to him, went gloomily away, and watched to see what would become of the city.

But if God was slow to anger with the Ninevites, He was certainly so with His own prophet. Though the murmuring was repeated, He, Who knew how great the trial was, deigned by acted parable and by gentle

¹ Matt. xii. 41.

words to justify His own ways to man. The sin of Jonah has seemed to many great and incomprehensible; they forget that it is often repeated in our own days. To desire that the enemies of our country may be plunged into utter ruin is to desire with Jonah that the Ninevites may not repent and be saved.

While Jonah was thus prophesying to a Gentile nation, God's chosen people were not left without teachers. And indeed they needed a warning voice as much as the Ninevites. They had risen from the state of depression into which the Syrian conquests had brought them, and during the reign of the victorious Jeroboam II. they attained to one of great prosperity. It was outward prosperity, it was inward decay. No repentance had raised the spiritual state of the nation. Success had only brought with it the most horrible forms of luxurious sin. Drunkenness was the prevailing sin of the time, a sin shared in by princes, priests, nobles, and even great ladies.¹ Hard grinding oppression of the poor, robbery and murder followed.² This was the condition of the kingdom of Israel when once more, as in the days of the first Jeroboam, God sent a prophet from Judah to denounce the sins of Israel. "A child of nature,"³ as he has been called, Amos was not brought up or trained in any of the schools of the prophets. He, as David had been, was a herdsman on the wild hills of Judæa, and a cultivator of wild figs at Tekoah, a village about six miles from Bethlehem.⁴ "His writings are filled with allusions to the deep clefts, the foaming winter torrents that descend to the Dead

¹ Hosea iv. 11, vii. 5; Isa. xxviii. 1, 7, 8; Amos iv. 1.

² Amos ii. 6-8; Hosea vi. 8, 9.

³ Dr. Pusey on Amos.

⁴ Amos vii. 14, 15.

Sea, to the wild animals, especially to the lions, of this savage district."¹ This was the prophet who had travelled northwards into the kingdom of Jeroboam, and proclaimed God's coming judgments on the mountains of Samaria. Like his predecessor, Amos, too, came to Bethel, the great seat of the calf-worship, and there uttered a terrible prediction. "The high places" and "the sanctuaries should be laid waste," and "the house of Jeroboam," that is, the descendants of Jehu, now seemingly so prosperous, were to fall by the sword. The captivity of the whole people would follow.²

It is evident that the words made some impression on the people, so much so that Amaziah, the priest of the golden calves, thought it necessary to warn the king. Such predictions had been accomplished before on the house of the first Jeroboam and on those of Baasha and Ahab. Amaziah represented this as a conspiracy against the reigning house, and added that "the land was not able to bear" the prophet's words.³ We know not what course the king adopted, but the false priest proceeded to threaten Amos, and scornfully told him to prophesy in Judah, his own country, and to leave alone the sanctuary of Bethel. A further judgment on the priest and his family was drawn down by this conduct; and the prophet apparently continued either from Judæa or some other part of the country to warn the people. It was in vain; even the accomplishment of the signs given brought no amendment. On the death of Jeroboam II. his son Zachariah succeeded to the throne, but had occupied it but a few months when his murder put an end to the dynasty of

¹ Stanley's *Jewish Church*, ii. 444.

² Amos vii. 9, 11.

³ Amos vii. 10.

Jehu. For about forty years longer the kingdom lingered on, but it was a time of constant decay. One pretender to the throne succeeded another, and almost all rose by murder. The cruelty of some of these usurpers astonished even that cruel age.¹ And still the growing wickedness, the measure of crime heaped up, was denounced by the prophets in language which seems full of horror. Hosea's words pass all that have preceded them: "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, and killing and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood."² Even nature seemed to shudder at the wickedness of man. Amos had said, "I will darken the earth in the clear day;" and we know that three almost total eclipses took place at this time, and a terrible earthquake shook the whole land. Thus natural causes, which at other times might have been but signs of God's power, became to the doomed Israelites signs of His wrath.

And now the long-predicted vengeance began to come. The first Assyrian invasion took place in the reign of the cruel Menahem, who became a tributary king to Assyria.³ From this time the kings of Israel only held a show of power under the authority of the great Assyrian monarch. Their efforts to throw off the yoke only brought it down more heavily upon them. Three separate invasions of Northern Palestine were made by Tiglath-Pileser. In the second he carried off a first instalment of captives, and "lightly afflicted the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphthali;"⁴ in the third he made the first great rent in the kingdom, overrun-

¹ 2 Kings xv. 16.

² Hosea iv. 2.

³ 2 Kings xv. 19.

⁴ 2 Kings xv. 29; Isa. ix. 1.

ning and utterly conquering the trans-Jordanic country, and carrying away captive the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh.¹ It was in the days of Pekah, son of Remaliah, that the land of Jephthah and of Elijah was thus severed from the rest of Israel. But the remainder was soon to follow. Speaking from the neighbouring land of Judah, Isaiah warned the Israelites, "For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still."²

The murder of Pekah placed Hoshea, the nineteenth and last king of Israel, on the throne. Soon after his accession, Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, who had succeeded Tiglath-Pileser, came up and exacted tribute. The state of the country, half-depopulated and ground down by these exactions, was no doubt miserable enough, and Hoshea seems to have formed a wild hope of deliverance through a league with Egypt, which was just now governed by a brave Ethiopian prince. The effort became known to Shalmaneser, and in a second expedition he took prisoner the last king of Israel. Troubles in his own country possibly occasioned a delay in his further operations against Israel, but in the year B.C. 723 the last and greatest Assyrian invasion took place. The Israelites still it seemed could make some resistance. We get a glimpse of some struggles, some dreadful "day of battle" when "Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel," and "the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children."³ A long siege of Samaria followed, which lasted till B.C. 721. It lasted longer than the life of Shalmaneser the oppressor, and "the king of Assyria" who at last "took Samaria"⁴

¹ 1 Chron. v. 26.

³ Hosea x. 14.

² Isa. ix. 12, 17, 21, x. 4.

⁴ 2 Kings xvii. 6.

was Sargon,¹ his successor. He, renowned especially for his many deportations of captive people from one land to another, carried away into Assyria the greater part at least of the Israelitish people. Changed indeed from the days when they came with a high hand out of Egypt, and took the labours of the people in possession, they followed their conquerors to a strange land, and once more became slaves. "The wild" Assyrian "boar out of the wood" had wasted the vine of Israel, the wild beast of the field had devoured it."² As a nation the ten tribes of Israel never rose again: yet promises were made to them of spiritual consolation; and at this the darkest time of their history, the prophet exclaims, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help."³

¹ According to the Assyrian inscriptions, Sargon claims to have captured Samaria in the first year of his reign.

² Psa. lxxx. 13.

³ Hosea xiii. 9.

LESSON VI.

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

FROM the consideration of the history of the Northern Kingdom of Palestine we turn back to follow that of the Southern,—the separate kingdom of Judah. The interest of this history is very different from that of the kingdom of Israel; in Judah it centres round one tribe, one city, one holy place of worship, and one family, the house of David. Its concentrated interests naturally led to the intense nationality which has always distinguished the Jews of later times.

When Jeroboam led the successful revolt against Judah, Rehoboam was left with only two tribes, those of Judah and Benjamin, as his subjects. With these he intended to make an attack on the revolted tribes, but was stopped by God's message spoken by Shemaiah, who was the chief prophet at this time in Judah, as Ahijah of Shiloh was in Israel. Two things are noticeable in the message: the tie of brotherhood between the two sections of the nation was not to be forgotten though the outward unity was destroyed; and the revolt was to be accepted as a punishment from God. Rehoboam obeyed the prophet's word, and for the first three years of his reign did well and wisely. He acted on the defensive, and fortified his towns,

more however on the south and west, as a protection against Egypt, than on the Israelitish frontier. He placed his own sons in these fortified towns, and provisioned the fortresses and made them strong against attack. The establishment of the calf-worship in Israel brought all the true priests and Levites, with many God-fearing men of other tribes, into the dominions of Rehoboam.

Unhappily the king's heart was not right with God, and fear alone seems to have kept him in the true path. The son of one of Solomon's Ammonitish wives, he had probably been in some sort a worshipper of Moloch their god from his childhood, though he no doubt combined with it some worship of Jehovah. And now, following the example of his father, he had married many wives, and amongst them was one, the best beloved of all, who exercised for some time a fatal influence in Judah. Maachah, the granddaughter of Absalom, seems to have possessed those gifts of beauty and fascination which distinguished her grandfather. Her aunt and her mother were both renowned for their beauty, and Maachah herself became the ruling influence during the next few years of the kingdom's history. A horrible idol was raised by her, and added to the number of the false shrines which had been erected in the days of Solomon.

Rehoboam and his people turned more and more from the worship of God. A speedy judgment followed. Shishak, King of Egypt, excited probably by his old ally Jeroboam, invaded Judah, and the repentance of the king and his princes only secured for them "some deliverance." The prophet Shemaiah announced both the judgment and its mitigation.

Jerusalem was saved, but the country suffered sorely from the invasion. A record carved on the stones of Karnak, the great ruined temple of Egypt, may still be read, in which the cities of Judah destroyed by Shishak are enumerated, and with them certain Levitical cities within the kingdom of Israel, a circumstance that seems to shew that Jeroboam had induced Shishak's invasion, and made use of his power to punish the Levites who had deserted him. The great treasures collected by Solomon were sacrificed to buy off the Egyptian invader. The brazen shields which Rehoboam substituted for his father's shields of gold formed a fit emblem of the change of times. An age of brass had succeeded to the one of gold.

Abijah, the son of Rehoboam and Maachah, who reigned after his father, did not attempt any reformation of the national worship. "His heart was not perfect," and though he encouraged his armies and gained victories in the name of Jehovah, he made no effort to put down the idolatrous worship favoured by his mother.

His son Asa, however, was a man of different character. He was apparently but a youth when he came to the throne, and his long reign of forty years gave time for great changes both in the political and the religious condition of the kingdom of Judah. The first of these was accomplished by Asa's decisive victory over the army of Egypt, led by Zerah the Ethiopian. This was the only time in which the Jews conquered in an open field either the Assyrians or the Egyptians. From the time of this victory the Egyptian power ceased for a long period to be formidable to Judah.

But the greatest victory of Asa's reign was that which he gained over idolatry. It was indeed a reformation. His trust in war had been in God; and when he returned from victory, with the knowledge that his prayer¹ had been heard, he was met by the prophet Azariah, with words which stirred him up to a fresh struggle. A general destruction of idols throughout the land took place, and Asa broke down the influence which Maachah his grandmother had exercised for so long. He removed her from her place as Queen Mother, and destroyed her horrible idol. Though in his later years Asa fell into several sins, yet he never returned to idolatry. "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days;" and the continuing of the worship on high places only shews that the most earnest efforts of the kings of Judah failed of complete success. A great measure of success however attended Asa's reformation, as he not only removed idols, but caused the people once more, as in the days of Joshua, to enter into a solemn covenant with God.

The kingdom of Judah rose to still greater prosperity and to a still purer religious condition during the next reign, that of Asa's son, Jehoshaphat. The character of this king is revealed to us more plainly than that of those who went before him. He was full of an intense faith and of earnest piety. With a love of justice resembling that of Solomon, he combined the hatred of idolatry and love of the true worship which had distinguished Asa his father. Yet he was wanting in firmness and consistency, and in his desire for peace forgot the reiterated commands of God to separate from idolatry.

¹ 2 Chron. xiv. 11.

Early in his reign Jehoshaphat appointed a commission of priests and Levites, who, aided by the princes, were to go through the cities of Judah, carrying with them the book of the law, and teaching the people out of it. As the king had destroyed many (though apparently not all) of the high places left by Asa, he doubtless felt the need of supplying the place of this irregular worship with instruction in the truth. Some have seen in this scheme of Jehoshaphat's the first establishment of synagogues. We have really no authority for affirming this, but it was undoubtedly a means of reviving both the knowledge of, and reverence for, the Word of God. It may also have eventually conduced to the custom which in later years prevailed, that a synagogue, with constant reading of the Word, should be established wherever there were as many as ten Jews to assemble.

But this was not Jehoshaphat's only effort to raise the tone of his people. He himself went on a circuit through the country teaching, to bring "the people back to the Lord God of their fathers." He strove to cause the Law to be not only heard but obeyed by his efforts for strict purity in the administration of justice. He appointed special officers to judge in "matters of the Lord," for the king's matters, and for the common justice of the realm; while in the appeal which he made to the judges, he raised up the loftiest ideal of their position, even that they stood in the place of God. "Ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, Who is with you in the judgment." These words are almost an echo of those of the eighty-second Psalm, which, written probably about this time, is filled with the same spirit as Jehoshaphat's words.

This noble internal administration was however but one half of Jehoshaphat's activity. The external affairs of his reign are also singularly interesting, and of much importance towards the understanding of the rest of the history of Judah. It is here that we come across the weakness of the king's character. Though in the early part of his reign he fortified himself against any invasion from the northern kingdom, yet he undoubtedly desired before all things that peace should unite all the Israelites in one bond. At first sight this desire cannot but appear wise and right, especially as Jehoshaphat shewed no desire to aggrandize himself through it. There was but one objection to it, but that one was fatal. The King and Queen of Israel at this time were Ahab and Jezebel, and the worship most prominent in the land was that of Baal. An alliance therefore with the northern kingdom should have been impossible to a son of David. In spite of the warnings of prophets, Jehoshaphat suffered his love for peace to overcome his love for truth, and in direct disobedience to God's command, "mingled himself with the heathen," and those who were as heathen, and formed a strict alliance with the guilty house of Ahab, which was already under the curse of God.

In two warlike expeditions he accompanied Ahab and his son Jehoram to battle, and he joined his ships to those of Ahaziah, Ahab's other son. Though respected by Elisha, the prophet of Israel, he was each time reproved by Jehu and Eliezer, prophets of Judah. He never however realized the sin he was committing. He even allowed the marriage of his son Jehoram with Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, a fatal marriage which eventually destroyed most of the good

effected by Jehoshaphat. This sin is the dark side of the king's character; and his weakness is conspicuous in that, while still continuing the course resolved on, he was yet ever ready to soothe his conscience by inquiring of a prophet of the Lord.

But in one glorious event of his life we have nothing to lament over. The wild tribes of Moab and Ammon invaded Judah, skirting the Dead Sea (as is customary with the robber bands of the present day) as far as to Engedi. So great was their company that the king was filled with fear, and even anticipated that he and his people would be cast out of the land. In his distress, he proclaimed a fast, and gathered a large assembly from all parts of Judah together in the Temple. This assembly met in fear and in fasting, that of Solomon at the dedication in rejoicing and feasting, yet the one event recalls the other. Again the scene is in the court of the Temple, again the chief actor is the king, who addresses the prayer to God, while men and women and even children are standing round him. His appeal to God was threefold; was He not all-powerful, was He not their own God, had He not promised to hear prayer offered to Him in that place? In recalling God's past favour to His people Jehoshaphat remembered Abraham, whom he called "the Friend of God," an expression afterwards repeated by Isaiah and St. James;¹ and in pleading the sanctity of the Temple he repeated almost the words of Solomon. Solomon's prayer was visibly accepted in the descent of fire from heaven, Jehoshaphat's received a yet more direct answer. At once and in the presence of all assembled, the Spirit of God

¹ Isa. xli. 8; James ii. 23.

came on a Levite named Jahaziel, who spoke out inspired words of strong encouragement and promise of victory. King and people fell down before the Lord in worship, while from the Levites arose the sound of those praises which so often strengthened the heart of the Israelite.

Doubt and fear were past ; early in the morning the king, encouraging his people with noble words, marched out at their head, the sacred songs of Zion being chanted before them. They marched about ten or twelve miles to a well-known watch-tower erected no doubt for use in the case of such an invasion. From thence they could survey the wilderness, and a strange and awful sight met their eyes. There lay the enemy they had so much feared prostrate on the ground ; no living man stood up to oppose them, only dead corpses remained, for by the will of God they had turned their swords against each other, and destroyed themselves. With much spoil the king and his army returned again to Jerusalem, and once more they met in the Temple court, not now for prayer and fasting, but for praise and thanksgiving. The words they used probably remain to us in the forty-eighth Psalm, words singularly applicable to their deliverance, though they also express the praise of every heart which has been delivered by God from the powers of darkness. "Lo," they said, "the kings were assembled, they passed by together." "Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail." Then remembering the Temple prayers, they exclaimed, "We have thought of Thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy Temple;" "This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our Guide even unto death."

LESSON VII.

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH—*Continued.*

THE consequences of Jehoshaphat's sin shewed themselves immediately after his death. His eldest son Jehoram, who had married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, appears to have been associated with his father in the kingdom. Not content with the pre-eminence given him, he caused the death of all his brothers, lest any of them might prove his rivals. A writing of the Prophet Elijah sent to him foretold his own terrible death, and the calamities which would follow upon his sins. To no prophet of God, however, would Jehoram listen. His wife Athaliah had inherited the power, the daring courage and devotion to the idolatrous worship of Phenicia, which distinguished her mother Jezebel, and from the time of the death of Jehoshaphat she became the ruling power in the state. Led by her decided will, Jehoram became himself an idolater, walking in the way of her relations the kings of Israel, and leading his people to do the same. In his reign the prophecy made by Isaac to Esau was fulfilled, and the Edomites, descendants of Esau, broke away from the kingdom of Judah.¹ During this revolt all Jehoram's sons, save

¹ Gen. xxvii. 40 ; 2 Kings viii. 22.

one, were put to death. His own miserable death followed soon after. The husband of Athaliah outlived his father for only about six years, and he passed away unlamented and undesired. His death however did not daunt Athaliah. Her only son, Jehoahaz or Ahaziah (the names are equivalent), came to the throne, and "his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly." Athaliah succeeded now to the position of Queen-mother, which Maachah had occupied in the days of Abijah, but her son's reign lasted but for one year. The unholy alliance formed between the two kingdoms was the immediate cause of his death; for, having accompanied his uncle Jehoram of Israel in his Syrian wars, he went to see him afterwards, and was thus involved in the destruction of the house of Ahab by Jehu. The nephews of Ahaziah were slain soon after. Jehu's revolution took from Athaliah not only her last remaining son, but all her own relations of the kingdom of Israel. She was now the sole royal supporter of the worship of Baal, and the death of her son would naturally deprive her of her position as Queen-mother. Her energy however rose above all dangers; with no love for the house of David, she at once put to death all the seed royal, that is, Ahaziah's sons and remaining nephews. She then seized the throne for herself.

"Athaliah did reign over the land." The sacred historian disdains to describe further the reign of this idolatrous usurping Queen, who strove thus to strengthen her position by the murder of her own grandchildren. We can however glean, from a few slight notices, something of the character of her six years' reign. In Jerusalem itself, near to the Temple, arose a great heathen temple to Baal, with its altars and

images, and a special priest, named Mattan. To build this house of Baal the stones and timber were taken from the Temple of the Lord, and even the sacred vessels of the sanctuary were removed and used in the heathen rites.

This profanation had probably commenced during the two last reigns, as the sons of Athaliah are said to be involved in it.¹ The days were indeed evil for Judah and Jerusalem. With a usurper reigning, the worship of Baal established and the Temple of Jehovah in ruins, little remained of the kingdom of David. God had indeed made a covenant with David "to give a light to him and to his sons for ever,"² but the light seemed quenched now, and to both the triumphant Athaliah and the sorrowing servants of Jehovah the line of David must have appeared extinguished.

God's promise however had not failed, and to a very few persons it was known that one tender shoot from the root of Jesse yet survived. In this dark period of the history of Judah, one hero was raised up through whose agency a counter-revolution was effected. Jehoiada the high-priest was decidedly the foremost man of his time. In character he joined to great courage a remarkable prudence and moderation in victory; his rank and position gave him apparently power enough to screen him even from Athaliah. Chief of the priests, he had married Jehosheba, a sister of the late king Ahaziah, and daughter of Jehoram, though not probably by Athaliah, but by another wife. When Athaliah's massacre of the family of David took place, Jehosheba succeeded in concealing Joash, one of her nephews, a little child of but a year old. With his

¹ 2 Kings xii. 5; 2 Chron. xxiv. 7.

² 2 Chron. xxi. 7.

nurse, he was concealed in a chamber of the palace where mattresses were kept.¹ From thence his aunt removed him into the house of the Lord, to which, as wife of the high-priest, she could easily have access. Here for six years he was concealed; probably passing under another name, his parentage unknown, as a great dramatic writer has supposed, save to Jehoiada and his wife. In the chambers of the ruined Temple the family of the high-priest and the royal child found a refuge, and among them the true God was still honoured, though the regular Temple worship seems to have been discontinued, and the courses of the Priests and Levites broken up.

At the end of six years, Jehoiada decided that the time was come to make a decided effort against the power of Athaliah. He communicated with five captains of the guard, and gained them over to the cause. The writer of the Chronicles gives us their names; in the Kings five divisions of the guard are mentioned.² Through them he summoned the Levites from all the cities of Judah, and then assembling captains, Levites, and all who could be depended on, in the Temple, he produced the little prince before them, and made them swear to support him. "Behold," he said, with prophetic boldness, "the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David." He then unfolded the details of his plan, which was to be accomplished on a sabbath-day. The royal guard, thus gained over, were to be divided into four bodies, the Levites into three; some were to guard the palace where Athaliah dwelt as usual, others to guard the

¹ Such is the meaning of the word translated "bed-chamber."

² 2 Chron. xxiii. 1; 2 Kings xi. 5-7.

palace gates, others to line the Temple court and guard the royal child then to be proclaimed king. In these duties the two accounts of the Kings and Chronicles lead us to think that the royal guard and the Levites were mingled together.

We can imagine the intense anxiety with which the little band in and around the Temple looked forward to the day appointed for their great effort; poets and musicians have alike striven to represent the ardour of the high-priest and the Levites, the fears and longings of Jehosheba and the women with her. The attachment to the true religion and to the house of David, fostered through the long reigns of Asa and Jehoshaphat, must still have been very strong among the people of Jerusalem, and shewed itself now in spite of the power of Athaliah. The people streamed into the Temple courts as the intentions of Jehoiada became known. There, raised on a pillar, which stood probably by the gate opening from the outer to the inner court, stood the little prince of seven years old, sole representative of the house of David. Around him were ranged the Levites and the guard, and before all the people Jehoiada and his sons anointed him king, placed a crown on his head, and above it apparently laid the book of the Law of God,—“the testimony.” With the heir of David was thus associated the pure worship of Jehovah, and at the sight the sound of the sacred trumpets and the songs of Zion once more burst forth, while the people clapped their hands and exclaimed “God save the king !”

The sound reached Athaliah in her palace, and with characteristic boldness she went herself at once to the Temple to inquire into the cause of it. True daughter

of Jezebel, she braved her opponents to the last, but a glance sufficed to shew her that the fatal hour was come, and the one little child saved from her cruelty had proved her strongest rival. One instinctive action and the cry "Conspiracy!" alone escaped her. At the high-priest's command she was led out beyond the sacred precincts and put to death by the sword. A renewal of the covenant between the king and the people and the Lord followed, and then the new house of Baal was destroyed, its priest slain before the altars, and the young king led across the deep valley which divides the Temple from the city of Zion, and installed in the palace of his fathers.

Only two deaths, those of the Queen and the priest of Baal, appear to have taken place. The great movement was regulated throughout by the wise moderation of Jehoiada, and while he lived the youth whom he had trained ruled well. Brought up in the Temple, it was natural that Joash should have a strong attachment to it; and accordingly we find that its repair was one of the first things which occupied his attention when old enough to take the management of affairs. He seems even to have rebuked Jehoiada with the rest of the priests for their neglect; but the magnanimous character of the high-priest is again shewn in his acceptance of the rebuke and his immediate execution of the king's plan. While Jehoiada lived indeed all went well, but after his death Joash's real weakness and cruelty shewed themselves. To please some of his nobles, the child of the Temple permitted the idolatrous shrines to rise again.

The goodness of God raised up prophets to warn His people, and many "burdens" or denunciations of evil

were uttered against Joash.¹ Most striking among these warnings was that of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. Standing near to the very spot where Joash as a little child had been crowned, he, who had assisted at his anointing, denounced the evil of the times. Joash, remembering not the kindness of Jehoiada, commanded the death of his son. It was amply avenged; the king's own violent death followed soon after, the idolatrous princes were destroyed in the Syrian war, and the murder of Zechariah was mentioned by our Blessed Lord as one of those deaths of the prophets of which the nation was guilty.² Yet did the great character of Jehoiada leave its mark behind; the order of the Levitical priesthood rose to higher power than ever, and in after years his name, like Aaron's, was used as that of a founder.³

¹ 2 Chron. xxiv. 27.

² There can be little doubt that the words "son of Barachias," at Matt. xxiii. 35, are due to the error of a copyist.

³ Jer. xxix. 26.

LESSON VIII.

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH—*Continued.*

THE death of Joash left the kingdom weakened by a Syrian invasion. The Temple had been despoiled of its treasures to buy off the invaders. The three kings who reigned during the next century—Amaziah, Uzziah and Jotham—struggled hard and with great success to raise again the condition of Judah.

Of these kings Amaziah, the son of Joash, was the least successful. Half-hearted in his service to God, and in his obedience to the prophets, he prospered in his wars with Edom, but was fearfully overthrown by Joash, king of Israel, whom he had defied. The wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and the Temple stripped of its remaining treasures.

Yet in the reign of Amaziah's son Uzziah, one of the longest in the history of Judah, a prosperity more resembling the happy days of Jehoshaphat or of Solomon returned. The king was active-minded and evidently endowed with varied talents; his army was carefully enrolled and provided with better arms; new engines for defence were made at Jerusalem, which, though represented in the ancient Assyrian sculptures, were probably new in Palestine. For building the king was

early in his reign renowned, and the breaches in the walls of Jerusalem made by Joash of Israel were now repaired. Uzziah was successful in his wars against all his neighbouring foes. For the internal condition of his country he cared equally, for like his great ancestor Solomon "he loved husbandry." His cattle and his vineyards were of great interest to him, and with watchtowers built for defence against robber bands, and many wells dugged in the dry "desert" country of Judæa, he improved the land.

Throughout his long reign Uzziah never appears to have become an idolater, as his father did. But in his prosperity "[his heart was lifted up," and he tried to invade the priest's office. We have seen how Solomon and Jehoshaphat offered prayers and sacrifices in the court of the Temple. Not content with that, Uzziah entered into the holy House itself, to which none but the priests were admitted, and despite the protest of the high-priest, advanced to burn incense on the golden altar which stood before the veil. It was the sin of Korah and his company (Numb. xvi.); and its punishment though not as in their case actual death, separated Uzziah during the rest of his days from all active life. Even as he stood before the altar, the leprosy fell on him, and he was thrust out from the Holy Place as one unclean, the unhappy sufferer himself hastening in horror to go out. It was the end of his rule: for the rest of his days he lived as a leper in a "several house," while his wise and good son Jotham ruled the land.

Uzziah's time is not however only or chiefly renowned for its improvements in the arts of war and husbandry. It was celebrated for a still more intellectual development, and one that has affected the religion of all suc-

ceeding times. Now first we can with certainty date the period of *written* prophecies as distinguished from the *spoken* Word. Isaiah, Hosea and Amos all date their prophecies as commencing in the time of Uzziah.

It was in the last days of the king's life, spent in the seclusion of his several house as a leper, that the young Isaiah received his call to the prophetic office.¹ A wondrous vision was vouchsafed to him; he saw the Lord enthroned within the Temple, and heard the Angelic Song, repeated since so often in the Church, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." The same feeling which afterwards prompted St. Peter's words to Christ, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,"² made the prophet shrink from the glorious vision, but with his lips cleansed by fire from the altar he received strength to say "Here am I; send me." And then came the warning expressed in words repeated by our Blessed Lord while on earth, that his message would appear to be delivered in vain.³ Even in that prosperous time of Uzziah and Jotham, when enemies all round had been subdued, and agriculture and arts flourished, the vision shewed to the prophet's eye the cities of Judah wasted, the land desolate, the people "removed far away." Yet with the gloom and desolation was mingled hope. The oak stripped of its leaves in winter may appear dead, but its substance remains in it; even so among the chosen people "a holy seed" should remain. The thought of this faithful few, the remnant which should be left, has been called "the key-note to the whole of Isaiah's prophecies." In that outwardly prosperous time, whilst

¹ Isa. vi.² Luke v. 8; Isa. vi. 5.³ Isa. vi. 10; Matt. xiii. 14.

he denounced the great men and the luxurious women of Jerusalem, he expressed the hope of his life in the name he gave to his eldest son "Shear-jashub"—"the remnant shall return."¹

During the reign of Jotham Isaiah seems to have taken but little part in public affairs. The threatening power of Assyria had led to the formation of a league between Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria. In this they were anxious that Judæa should join. But not trusting the house of David, they determined to place on the throne of Judah a man known as "the son of Tabeal."² They commenced their attacks during Jotham's reign, but made a more determined effort when his young son Ahaz, at sixteen years of age, succeeded him.³ The Jews then it would seem sustained two separate defeats from the Syrians and the Israelites, that inflicted by Pekah being especially disastrous.⁴ Many were killed, many carried away captive, though afterwards restored by the humane advice of the prophet Oded. And then during the panic caused by these defeats, the confederate kings sat down before Jerusalem to besiege it.⁵ At their approach the heart of the king and people was moved, "as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind."⁶ Ahaz however took measures for defence, and it was while he was visiting the works on the north-eastern side of the city that the prophet Isaiah met him. His first words were those of comfort: "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted." The evil counsel of the

¹ Isa. iii., vii. 3.

² Isa. vii. 6.

³ 2 Kings xv. 37.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxviii. 5, 6.

⁵ 2 Kings xvi. 5. It is in connection with this war that the name Jew first occurs in the Bible.

⁶ Isa. vii. 2.

king's enemies would not stand, Syria and Ephraim should both be soon destroyed, and within about two years¹ all danger from confederacy would have disappeared. He offered a sign or miracle, but the guilty conscience of the king (already an idolater) prompted him to decline it.

Events of greater moment, the fortunes of more people than those of Jerusalem, were however involved in the prophet's message, and he declared that Jehovah Himself would grant the sign. For Ahaz there was the special promise of deliverance from the confederacy within a short time²; for all the world a greater deliverance was unfolded in the words, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."³

The first fulfilment of the promise speedily followed, and it was effected through the instrumentality of the king of Assyria, "the rod of God's anger." With irresistible power, Tiglath-pileser, who then reigned over Assyria, overran the neighbouring kingdom of Syria, took Damascus the capital, and killed Rezin the king of Syria, one of the members of the confederacy against Judah. He went on to attack Pekah, king of Israel, and it was probably now that the kingdom of Israel was dismembered and the Trans-Jordanic tribes severed from their brethren.³

The King of Assyria was God's instrument, but Ahaz, who had refused to ask for a sign, would not wait for God's time, nor trust His prophet's word. Already, when in his utmost need, he had done worship to the gods of Damascus, as if he hoped for deliverance from them; and he strove to make his position stronger

¹ See Isa. vii. 16, viii. 4.

² Isa. vii. 14.

³ See Lesson V., p. 47.

by entering into a close alliance with the conquering king of Assyria. He went to meet him at Damascus, and from thence sent home a pattern of an altar, which was probably copied from one of those portable altars which the Assyrian monarchs took with them in war. It was in fact the recognition of the gods of the conqueror, and was not the only humiliation imposed on Ahaz by his too powerful ally. Once more the treasures of the Temple were paid as tribute, yet we are told "the king of Assyria distressed him, but strengthened him not." In every part of Jerusalem and in all the cities of Judah rose altars to strange gods, and at length the lamps in the Temple were put out, the doors closed, and the Temple worship suspended.¹ The death of Ahaz left the city and country reduced to as low a condition as in the times of Athaliah; it was indeed worse, for now it was the house of David itself which wearied not only men, but God also.²

¹ Chron. xxviii. 24, xxix. 3, 7.

² Isa. vii. 13.

LESSON IX.

THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH.

THE death of Ahaz placed his son Hezekiah on the throne of Judah. The young king succeeded in a time of great depression. The treasures of Judah had been expended in tribute to the great king of Assyria, and Hezekiah at his accession was but a vassal to the monarch who a few years later destroyed the kingdom of Israel. Within Jerusalem the worship of the true God had almost ceased; the Temple doors were closed, and instead of the sacrifices offered on one altar to one God, the city was crowded with shrines and altars to the false gods of the nations around. Hezekiah must have been brought up under the most unfavourable circumstances. With a weak father wholly given to idolatry, whose evil commands were at once obeyed by the compliant high-priest of his time, and whose bad example was willingly followed by his people, yet the new king had within him a different spirit, and a heart open to nobler impulses.

The counsellors who surrounded the throne represented two parties. The first of these were willing to continue both the idolatry and the policy of King Ahaz. They trusted in foreign alliances, some desiring to buy

off the Assyrians and remain tributary to them, while others (and these probably the larger number) hoped for a closer union with Egypt, in whose power alone they could see a force sufficient to counterbalance that of Assyria. Among these trusters in foreign treaties the chief leader seems to have been Shebna, the comptroller of the royal household. He was probably himself a man of foreign origin, who had been placed in office by King Ahaz. His position was one of great importance; he was invested with a peculiar "robe" and "girdle," and perhaps carried the key of state on his shoulder as a badge of office. Shebna's pride had become notorious, his chariots were regal in their splendour, and high up in the cliffs of Jerusalem he had caused a sepulchre to be hewn out for himself as though he had been one of the royal house. This great officer led the party who opposed themselves to the worship of Jehovah and to trust in Him.

There was however an opposite party, whose chief leader was undoubtedly the great prophet Isaiah, who ever since the days of King Uzziah had been bearing witness for the Lord. It was however apparently from the lips of another prophet that the words fell which produced the first great impression on Hezekiah. The prophet Micah was known as "the Morasthite," from the name of his native village Moresheth-gath, which, situated on the maritime plain, belonged to Judah. It was mentioned by the prophet in his visions as passing away from the kingdom of Judah as a bride might pass with presents or dowry to a new lord.¹ Micah's prophecies however mainly concern Jerusalem. His ministry appears to have begun after and closed before that of

¹ Micah i. 14.

Isaiah, who incorporated some of Micah's words among his own writings. It would seem that it was first in the reign of Jotham that Micah uttered the solemn words of warning, "Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps."¹ But, as has been well said, "the prophets did not heed repeating themselves. . . . So Micah repeated doubtless oftentimes those words."

At length they fell on an attentive ear. On some occasion, when the young king Hezekiah and the princes were assembled together, Micah, apparently at the risk of his life, dared to utter once more the warning cry.² The awful prediction was accompanied by strong denunciations of moral evil. The words touched the conscience of the king, and instead of dooming the prophet to death, he commenced, with prayer to God, an active reformation. To put down the false worship introduced by his father and to renew the true service of Jehovah became the ruling wish of his heart. It must have been very early in his reign that Hezekiah commenced his reformation, though we should understand the expression "first month"³ as meaning not the first of the reign, but the month Nisan, the first of the sacred year of the Jews. Hezekiah's first act was to open and cleanse the Temple. For this purpose he called together the priests and Levites, and in an animated speech told them of what was in his heart, and invited them to sanctify themselves. Many obeyed his word at once, but in this the Levites were more ready than the priests, some of whom, led no doubt by Urijah, who had so readily obeyed Ahaz, neglected to prepare themselves for the work.⁴

¹ Micah iii. 12.

³ 2 Chron. xxix. 3, 17.

² Jer. xxvi. 18.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxix. 34.

Notwithstanding this partial backwardness, those who did purify themselves carried on the work so zealously, that in sixteen days they were able to report to the king that the house of God was thoroughly cleansed. And then once more the silence in which its sacred courts had so long been left was broken, and the songs of Zion again sounded there, once more the lamps within the holy house were lighted, and the sacrifices were offered on the altar.

It was a great day for Hezekiah and his people, but the king's wishes went beyond it. The thought of the old union of Israel was in his mind; his renewal of the Temple services must have reminded him of the days when Solomon first consecrated it, and accordingly he himself "commanded that the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel." The northern kingdom was fast falling to pieces; the last king, Hoshea, was but a vassal to Assyria; the people were ruined by successive tributes and invasions. One ray of hope presented itself to Hezekiah. In this time of decay and misery might not the old spiritual unity be restored, might not the hill of Zion be again "the joy of the whole earth"?

With this view Hezekiah sent letters to the Ten Tribes and invited them to join with Judah in celebrating such a passover as they had not kept "of a long time." Even to the most northern point of Dan, through Ephraim, Manasseh, Zebulon and Asher, his messengers went. As a hope for national reunion the attempt failed; but it stirred up many to humble themselves before the Lord; even those priests who had held back from the reformation now in shame joined it; and at the end of the Passover the whole band of

worshippers joined in the destruction of all the idolatrous shrines around, and even of those high places which though originally intended for the worship of Jehovah had gradually been turned to evil uses.¹

So sweeping was the great reformation of Hezekiah, which once more brought back Judah to the true worship of God.

¹ 2 Chron. xxx. xxxi.

LESSON X.

THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH—*Continued.*

THE father of Hezekiah had left his son a city filled with idolatrous shrines, with the Temple of Jehovah desecrated. We have seen how Hezekiah, with the help of the prophets, priests and Levites, effected a religious reformation, and how he strove to include the northern tribes in it. But Ahaz had left yet another legacy behind him. When trembling for fear of the confederacy of Rezin and Pekah, he had made himself a tributary to the king of Assyria. Syria and Ephraim were ruined, of their capital cities of Damascus and Samaria the one was captured, the other about to be so, and the fear of the confederacy was at an end. But it was not so easy to get rid of the Assyrian supremacy when once it had been submitted to; and accordingly Hezekiah succeeded to the throne as a tributary of the great king of the East. The monarch on the Assyrian throne with whom he first came in contact was Sargon, in whose reign Samaria, first besieged by his predecessor Shalmaneser, finally fell. We must bear in mind in reading the following history that the two great powers of the Eastern world were now Egypt and Assyria; that, jealous of each other, they were con-

tinually struggling for the mastery; and that, since the destruction of the Syrian power, Judæa and the independent Philistine towns on the sea coast were the only states that intervened between them. It was this that rendered the vassalage of the king of Judah important to the king of Assyria, this that rendered Egypt, the former foe of Jerusalem, willing to become her ally.

To secure an entrance to and from Egypt, Sargon sent a general to besiege Ashdod. This city was important, as it commanded the highway through Palestine to Egypt. It is known to us as one of the chief seats of the Philistine Dagon-worship; and as having, with some other Philistine cities, always preserved its independence of the Israelites. In after times we hear of it again under its changed name of Azotus.¹ It is impossible to fix the precise order of the events of this period with certainty, but it seems probable that Hezekiah's dangerous illness, though mentioned in the Books of Kings, of Chronicles, and of Isaiah after the invasions of Sennacherib, really happened earlier,² during the time when Sargon still reigned in Assyria. Hezekiah had effected much for Judah, but he had hoped to do more. No son had yet been born to him to carry on the line of David, and when assured that his sickness was unto death, his bitter sorrow expressed itself in words of mourning into which those who look on death as the gate of life can hardly enter. Since the time of Solomon we know of no king whose joys and griefs were poured forth in poetry as were those of Hezekiah, and certainly none received a more dis-

¹ Acts viii. 40.

² Hezekiah's life was lengthened fifteen years after his sickness, and he died B.C. 697; his sickness was therefore B.C. 712.

tinct answer to prayer. Isaiah was commissioned to assure Hezekiah of three things: fifteen more years of life, deliverance from the might of Assyria, and a sign to assure him of the truth of the promise. How the sign was given we cannot fully explain; the dial of Ahaz was probably a flight of steps or "degrees" with an obelisk at the top. Such a construction was already in use among the Chaldæans for measuring time, and Ahaz may well have seen it when he visited Damascus. Bishop Hall¹ calls special attention to the fact that the miracle was a local one; the sun's shadow was seen to return on this particular dial and on no other. The deputation from Babylon had observed no such wonder in their own country. Therefore the sacred narrative precludes the notion that the earth's rotation was arrested. The miracle was in the dial, not in the sun. But what the exact nature of the miracle was we cannot say. The rumour of the wonder spread, and an embassy from Babylon came to inquire into it.

Babylon was not now "the lady of kingdoms" that she afterwards became. Fearing the growing power of Assyria, her king, Merodach-Baladan, in his embassy joined a political motive to the ostensible one of congratulating Hezekiah on his recovery. He desired to ally himself with Judæa against Assyria. Hezekiah proved equally willing to enter into the alliance, displayed his treasures to the Babylonians, and refused the accustomed tribute and presents to Assyria. To the king of Judæa it was a proud moment. With prolonged life assured to him, he rejoiced in his riches and felt secure in his new alliance. In that dangerous hour of exultation, "he rendered not again for the

¹ Contemplation on "Hezekiah recovered."

benefit done to him, for his heart was lifted up."¹ It was but for a short time. The words of the prophet lifted the veil from the future, and the new allies were shewn to be those who should destroy his city and lead his nation into captivity. The answer of Hezekiah is one of utter resignation; God's word must be good, and he will be thankful for any mercy shewn, thankful that at least the fifteen years of life granted to so much prayer shall be "years of peace and truth."

Peace however appeared to be far off. Sennacherib, the proudest and mightiest of Assyria's kings, succeeded his father Sargon, and in the fifth year of his reign made an expedition against Egypt. His march was along the sea coast of Palestine, and near to the Philistine town of Ekron he gained a great victory over the Egyptians. Hezekiah had joined himself to the defeated side, and now the victors exacted vengeance. The mighty Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem, and the vassal king, who had dared to resist Sennacherib, was now to feel the weight of his arm. All the fenced cities of Judæa were taken and the hill of Zion itself besieged. We have probably in the twenty-second chapter of Isaiah a picture of the state of Jerusalem at this time. A desperate effort had been made to fortify the city, and to repair the breaches. Then the people, panic-stricken and perplexed, had gone up on the housetops to gaze on the invading army. With the panic and perplexity was mingled that fearful revelry which so often accompanies despair. In that terrible hour the most painful sight to the prophet was the feasting when the Lord called to mourning, the mad joy when there should have been

¹ 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26.

sorrow. "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die," was the cry in the beleaguered city, while in the prophet's ears sounded the words, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die."

Thus attacked from without, and pressed within by counsellors like Shebna, who urged submission, and viewing on all sides the mingled despair and levity of his people, the king gave way, and purchased by the sacrifice of all the treasures of the newly-adorned Temple a precarious peace. For this time his submission was accepted. The mighty king of Assyria drew off his troops, and returned to his own city of Nineveh. On the walls of the great palace which he raised there he has left a record of his triumph which still remains. It runs thus:—"Because Hezekiah, king of Judah, would not submit to my yoke, I came up against him, and by force of arms and by the might of my power I took forty-six of his strong fenced cities. . . . And Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem, his capital city, like a bird in a cage, building towers round the city to hem in, and raising banks of earth against the gates so as to prevent escape."

A peace so purchased could not be lasting. Hezekiah seems to have felt this, and accordingly entered into fresh negotiations with Egypt, the great enemy of Assyria. This was not by the advice of Isaiah, to whom "the strength of Pharaoh" was but "shame" and "the shadow of Egypt" "confusion."¹ Even more plainly it is revealed to him that "through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down," but that "the Egyptians shall help in vain." This fresh effort of the king's brought about the fall of the great minister Shebna, who, as is customary in the

¹ Isa. xxx. 3, 7.

East, accepted the inferior office of "scribe" or secretary, while Eliakim the son of Hilki'ah succeeded to Shebna's former office of comptroller of the household.¹

An interval of two or three years succeeded, and then once more the Assyrian army marched through Judæa. As before the real enemy against whom they came was Egypt, and Sennacherib therefore left Jerusalem for the present unattacked, laying siege to Lachish, a town in the extreme south of Palestine, probably now held by the Egyptians. Of that siege of Lachish it is thought that we have a picture on the engraved slabs discovered in Sennacherib's palace. It is at least a faithful representation of a siege conducted by him, and shews us the inhabitants still offering a desperate resistance, while the Assyrians plant scaling ladders against the walls; meanwhile Sennacherib, on a throne outside, his head shaded from the sun, calmly watches the cruel execution of the prisoners already taken. It is a significant picture of what those might expect who rebelled against the great king.

And now the story of Hezekiah rises to its highest point of interest. The Babylonians, with whom he had formerly sought alliance, had already been completely subdued by Sennacherib; and the Assyrian army lay between him and his other allies the Egyptians. The king of Judah seemed to stand alone and defenceless. He was soon reminded that his rebellion was not forgotten, by the arrival of an embassy with a message from the king of Assyria.

At that spot to the north of Jerusalem where Isaiah had met Ahaz and given him a sign, the Assyrians stood. They were headed by the 'Tartan' or general of the host, but the principal speaker was the chief

¹ Isa. xxii. 15-23.

cupbearer,¹ a high personage at an Eastern Court. It was clearly his intention to raise a revolt of the people against the king, and if possible to induce them to open the gates to him. The chief obstacle to this was Hezekiah's personal influence. To break down this was the great object of the cup-bearer's speech. Accordingly he mocked and derided Hezekiah's efforts after an alliance with Egypt, taunted him with the smallness of his followers, and represented him as a man forsaken by his God, skilfully introducing as a reason the destruction of the high places after the great Passover. He spoke, he said, to the people, and he took care that they should understand him. The gods of other nations, even of Samaria, had not been able to save their votaries from Assyria, why then should the God of Jerusalem be more invincible? The king's influence was however too strong to be thus set aside. Hezekiah's one command had been "Answer him not," and he was not answered.

In silence and horror at the blasphemy they had been compelled to hear, his ministers returned and reported the message to the king. But one hope remained to him; one voice had all along foretold his present desertion, but that same voice had said, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."² To Isaiah he sent the messengers to entreat for his prayers, while with all the outward signs of mourning he waited for the answer within the Temple courts. It was the moment when his fortunes fell the lowest, it was also that when his faith rose the highest. He waited, and the answer was not long in coming. There was no longer need for fear. The deliverance promised

¹ Rab-shakeh (chief cupbearer) is not a proper name, but a title.

² Isa. xxx. 15.

was to equal in magnitude the danger which had threatened.

The messengers of Sennacherib returned to him just at the time when the news of the approach of the army of Egypt had reached him. One foe must be dealt with before another could be attacked, and therefore the army before Jerusalem was withdrawn to aid the king in his siege of Libnah ; and a letter with the same threatening message, a letter of astonishment at the insane confidence of Hezekiah, was despatched to Jerusalem. It was a time of terrible suspense. Prostrate in the Temple, the king of Judah prayed to the Lord of Hosts, while in full confidence the king of Assyria prepared to march towards his enemy. But that night the living God, Whom he had defied, made the might of His arm to be felt, and destroyed, whether by pestilence or storm, the host of the Assyrians in their camp before Libnah.¹ Of that awful night no mention is found in the Assyrian records ; in Egypt there existed for many ages a statue raised in commemoration of a deliverance from the Assyrians through the might of the gods alone ; in Judæa, delivered from so great a peril, a more lasting monument was raised ; that of triumph and thanksgiving expressed in burning words of inspiration. "The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn," exclaimed the prophet whose words had been the stay of his nation during this crisis, while other voices sang "In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling-place in Zion ;" "God is in the midst of her ; she shall not be moved."

¹ According to Herodotus it was at Pelusium. That it was on the Egyptian frontier, and not (as some have supposed) before Jerusalem, seems clear.

LESSON XI.

THE REIGNS OF MANASSEH, AMON AND JOSIAH.

IT is very often remarked that certain events in a nation's story have a tendency to recur, and that history repeats itself. The story of the Kingdom of Judah and of the line of David is no exception to this rule. The reigns of Manasseh and Amon recall the evil days of Ahaz, the reformation of Josiah which succeeded bears some resemblance to that of Hezekiah.

At the death of Hezekiah, his son Manasseh was but a boy of twelve years old. From this we see that he was born after that time of sickness when, at the sufferer's prayer, were added fifteen years of life. "The father to the children shall make known Thy truth;" this had been the vow of Hezekiah when he recovered. His marriage probably took place after this, and seems to have been used by Isaiah as a type of the marriage between God and His Church, while the name of the Bride who became the mother of Manasseh, Hephzibah—"my delight is in her," is applied to the New Jerusalem.¹ The offspring of this much-blessed marriage did not however walk in his father's steps. We

¹ Isa. lxii. 4, 5.

can better understand some of the words of scorn and bitterness uttered by Isaiah when we perceive how little Hezekiah's reformatations and great deliverances had changed the heart of the people. Beneath all outward observances must have lain a root of utter unbelief. Their real trust was not in Jehovah, but in foreign alliances, and in efforts to assimilate their nation to foreign customs and ordinances. The boy-king was perhaps surrounded by counsellors who trained him in these thoughts after his father's death. They bore bitter fruit as he grew up to manhood, and in his long reign of fifty-five years, the longest known in Judah, his father's work was entirely undone. Once more Jerusalem was filled with idols, and the Temple desecrated.

During Manasseh's reign one new horror, which was apparently unknown before in Judah, is added, and recalls the days of Jezebel in Israel. This was persecution, the hunting even to death of those who still clung to the truth and worshipped Jehovah. "Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another." The results of this Reign of Terror are to be observed in the change of feeling expressed by the Jewish writers from this time. A deep conviction was felt that the woes so often denounced against God's people, if they forsook Him, were at hand, that the day of grace was past, and that nothing could restore the nation again to God's favour. But with this belief that they were cast away as a nation comes a more vivid perception of the relation existing between God and the soul, of the value of the individual, of the importance of the life or death of every human being. Suffering and persecu-

tion assumed a different aspect, the righteous man could only be purified and brought near to God by this means; nay, as the thought of the Promised Seed, the Messiah, which was perhaps for a while obscured, revived again, suffering was closely associated with Him, and "the Man of Sorrows" became the Hope of the Chosen People.

Meanwhile, as a kingdom, Judah was doomed. Once more the dreaded Assyrian host appeared before Jerusalem, and the king himself was carried off a captive. We know but little of this Assyrian invasion, no words of prophetic hope or confidence illumine it as in the days of Sennacherib and Hezekiah. Manasseh, we are told, was carried to Babylon, and this agrees with the fact, which we know from other sources, that Esarhaddon, son of Sennacherib, was the only Assyrian monarch who ever held his court there. Manasseh's repentance, though doubtless sincere, could not undo the evil he had done.

His son Amon (whose name seems to indicate Egyptian influence in Judæa) re-established the idolatry which his father in his last years, after his return from captivity, had sought to put down.

One more hero arose to sit on the throne of David before the full accomplishment of God's judgments; but the history of his reign serves to shew that the most righteous efforts may be made too late, and that one heroic soul cannot put life into a dying commonwealth. Josiah was but a child when he ascended the throne. A deep gloom had settled over those who yet remained faithful, and the visions that they saw were those of terror. "The great day of the Lord is near a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of

wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess."¹ These were the expressions used by Zephaniah, the prophet of that time, and such words of hope or joy as fell from his lips referred evidently to a far distant future. Near at hand he could see only trouble, punishment and judgment. Her enemies would prevail against Jerusalem. Manasseh, it is true, had endeavoured to render the city strong, and had built, we are told, a wall "even to the entering in at the fish gate." In mournful allusion to this attempt, Zephaniah pointedly says, "In that day . . . there shall be a noise of a cry from the fish gate."²

We cannot suppose Josiah to have grown up ignorant of these prophecies. But we must the more admire the gallant struggle that he made against the sins of his time, when we remember how little he can have been supported by the hope of success. The events of his reign are not perhaps specially striking, but the interest centres round the resolute soul, who, knowing the doom pronounced, yet strove to strike one blow for the right before the end should come. Josiah shewed the strong bent of his mind when he was but fifteen or sixteen years old. At twenty he commenced his reforms.³ In sweeping away once more the idolatrous places of worship he fulfilled literally the prophecy uttered, in the days of the first Jeroboam, by the man of God who came from Judah.

His power to do this throughout the northern kingdom is easily understood by the events which took place about this time in other countries. Israel had been taken captive into Assyria, and the land of Israel held as a province by the Assyrian kings, who reigned

¹ Zeph. i. 14, 15. ² 2 Chr. xxxiii. 14; Zeph. i. 10. ³ 2 Chr. xxxiv. 3.

at Nineveh. Babylon had also been subject to them, but now a mighty change occurred. The great woes foretold by the prophet Nahum were accomplished. "He that dasheth in pieces had come up," and Nineveh, the lion who had torn in pieces enough for his whelps, and filled his holes with prey, was cut off, and his dwelling destroyed.¹ From this time Babylon, who rebelled against and conquered Assyria, became the Mistress of the East. Remembering the prediction of Isaiah to Hezekiah,² the name of the conquering city must have sounded ominously to Josiah. For the time however it opened to him an increase of power. In the confusion of that time he was recognized apparently as sovereign throughout the northern kingdom, and this enabled him at Bethel to destroy, as had been foretold, the great altar which Jeroboam had there raised.

As in the days of Jehoiada and of Hezekiah, the rooting up of idolatry was accompanied by the restoration of the Temple. It was during this work that Hilkiah the high-priest found the Book of the Law. Copies of it had at no time probably been plentiful, yet in the reign of Jehoshaphat the commission of Levites sent out by him took it with them to teach the people. To a generation which had grown up during the evil days of Manasseh and Amon it was probably but little known, and copies of it may even have been purposely destroyed during the persecution. To the king, who had reached his twenty-sixth year, the words he heard from it appear to have been new. They made a deep impression on him. Humbling himself, he sent to inquire of God through Huldah, who in her acknowledged

¹ Nahum ii. 1, 11-13.

² Isa. xxxix. 6.

position as a prophetess of Jehovah recalls the earlier glories of Miriam and Deborah. The answer given was one which renewed the impending judgment on the nation, though with a promise that the king himself should end his days in peace. A less resolute man might have despaired. To Josiah it was but the call to make what further exertion might yet be possible during his own lifetime. It was the greatest day of his life when he assembled together all his people, and, more successful than Hezekiah had been, reunited Israel and Judah in keeping the Passover. It was the last glory of the kingdom, and those who told its history declared that the like had not been seen since the days of Samuel and of the Judges.

Thirteen years more passed, of which we know but little. During it we may gather that Josiah submitted himself, as a tributary, to the now powerful king of Babylon. He is called "king of Assyria" by the Jewish historians, and indeed he was so, for all that had once belonged to Nineveh now owned the sway of Babylon. But one rival dared to oppose, and this, as in the days of Assyrian supremacy, was Egypt. Once more the Holy Land was invaded by the combatants. Josiah attempted to withstand the march of the Egyptian invader, who claimed, and perhaps rightly, to be himself the minister of God. How far Josiah ought to have recognized him as such it is hard now to say. He persevered. Heroic to the last, he fought till smitten by the arrows shot by the renowned Egyptian archers. Then, with perhaps some hope of saving the life on which his country's very existence hung, he exclaimed, "Have me away ; for I am sore wounded." A second chariot (probably lighter than that used for war) was

at hand, and an attempt was made to fly. But before they had gone far on their journey the wounded man had died, and it was but the body of King Josiah, the first king of Judah who had fallen in battle, that reached Jerusalem. Yet were the words of the prophetess true; compared with the desolation that was to follow, the time of Josiah's death was peace, and he was buried with the lamentations of all his people. No greater instance of mourning could afterwards be given than that "mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."¹

¹ Zech. xii. 11-14. The battle of Megiddo is supposed by many to be that mentioned by the Greek historian Herodotus under the name of Magdolus (ii. 159). Megiddo was situated within the borders of Issachar, in the plain of Esdraclon.

LESSON XII.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

THE battle of Megiddo and the death of Josiah left Judah defenceless. Hastily the people anointed one of the sons of the late king (apparently not the eldest), and caused him to ascend the throne. Some power that might serve as a defence to Jerusalem seems to have been perceived in Shallum, or Jehoahaz which second name he took probably when he became king. But none of the virtues of his father displayed themselves in him, and it was but for a short time that he remained in power. Whether by force or by treachery, the young king in three months' time fell into the hands of the victorious king of Egypt who had slain his father. "The nations heard" of the young lion who "had learned to catch the prey," and "he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt."¹ Yet did his people lament for him, and "weep sore for him," knowing that he should "return no more, nor see his native country."²

Meanwhile the Egyptian king was for the time su-

¹ Ezek. xix. 3, 4.

² Jer. xxii. 30.

preme. He laid an immense tribute¹ on the land, and raised to the throne which he had rendered vacant another and an elder son of Josiah's, a half-brother of the unfortunate Jehoahaz. This new king also received a new name, and it is possible that the meaning of "Jehoiakim"—"Jehovah will set up"—may have suggested to some in Jerusalem a hope of some fresh Divine aid. The hope, if it was indulged, was contrary to the distinctly pronounced judgment of God, and was doomed to bitter disappointment. The new king proved himself fierce and godless, and was especially distinguished for his grinding oppression and cruelty. The princes who surrounded him were but too willing to walk in the same steps. The hollowness of the reformation which the zeal of Josiah had effected was now plainly shewn. Judah had not turned unto God "with her whole heart, but feignedly."² Again the incense burned to Baal, and drink-offerings were poured to other gods, while king and princes, as if in defiance of the prophecy which told of the coming destruction, built splendid palaces of cedar, and withheld wages from the labourers who worked for them. And even the voice of prophecy waxed uncertain, for Jerusalem abounded with false prophets and prophetesses, who loudly announced that they saw visions and dreams of peace.

In the midst of these, one form stands out pure from the surrounding evil, one voice is heard true amidst so much falsehood, tender and pathetic, while fierceness

¹ Very much less however than the tribute exacted of Hezekiah by Sennacherib; shewing the already impoverished state of the land. Cp.

² Kings xviii. 14, xxiii. 33.

² Jer. iii. 10.

and oppression ruled all around. Jeremiah was born at Anathoth, a city of the priests which lay within the border of Benjamin at about three miles from Jerusalem. He probably lived here during the reign of Josiah, which may account for the fact that the king consulted Huldah and not Jeremiah when the Book of the Law was found. Jeremiah however was already a prophet by the direct call of God, as well as a priest by birth. It was probably his early prophecies which drew on him the hatred of the men of Anathoth, his native city. They sought his life (Jer. xi. 21), and he perhaps escaped from them by leaving Anathoth and making Jerusalem his home. Anyhow the streets of Jerusalem, the deep valley of Hinnom and the Temple courts were the places in which from this time we find him prophesying. He was by nature tender, reluctant to condemn; yet "filled with indignation" by God, his whole life was one continued protest against all he saw around him. King, princes and people, yet more priests and prophets, were all alike denounced by him.

But the days of Micah and Isaiah were past; now king and people disregarded the warning voice and turned in hatred against the prophet. Jehoiakim had ascended the throne as a vassal of Egypt, and paid the tribute enforced by Pharaoh-Necho, exacting it from his people, while he himself lived in luxury and selfishness. This state of things lasted however for about three years only, and then for the first time the long-dreaded army of Babylon appeared in Judæa. It was scarcely more powerful than that of Assyria had been, but it was led by a prince whose name became greater and more widely known than even that of Sennacherib.

Nebuchadnezzar was probably not yet the actual king of Babylon, for it would appear that his father's death occurred shortly after this time. When he entered Judæa he came as a conqueror; the great power of Egypt, which had been to the Jews sometimes friendly sometimes oppressive, had fallen before him. To Jeremiah the whole battle-scene at Carchemish had been made plain; he had seemed to see Egypt rising up as a flood, the raging of the horses and the chariots, the falling of the valiant men, and had repeated the cry, "Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is but a noise."¹

It was the end of the Egyptian power in Palestine, but it did but cause a stronger foe to invade her. After a short siege Nebuchadnezzar made himself master of Jerusalem, and the first captivity of Judah occurred. Some of the precious vessels of the Temple were removed to Babylon, and a certain number of captives carried away. Among these were Daniel and his three companions.² Jehoiakim himself was bound with fetters to go also as a prisoner to Babylon, but Nebuchadnezzar seems to have changed his purpose, and reinstated him as a tributary of his own. In three years' time Jehoiakim rebelled, an act of faithlessness and folly which brought the greatest calamities on the land. Bands of men of different nations, at the command of Nebuchadnezzar, overran the country and destroyed it. Now probably occurred the great famine described by Jeremiah.³ Both he and the writer of the Kings call to mind, as a reason for the afflictions they are describing, the cruelty and the sins of Manasseh.⁴ From the open country the wild descendants of Jona-

¹ Jer. xlvi.

² Daniel i.

³ Jer. xiv.

⁴ 2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4; Jer. xv. 4.

dab the son of Rechab sought refuge in the city from these terrible invasions, yet still they strove to obey their father's commands so far as was possible, a striking contrast in the prophet's eyes to that people who had turned from their Heavenly Father.¹

In the midst of his sorrow Jeremiah never failed to warn all around of the evil to come. Imprisoned at one time, he sent God's word written on a roll by his faithful companion Baruch, and caused it to be read to king and princes. Those who remembered the conduct of Josiah when the Book of the Law was found shuddered as they saw his impious son cut the message of God with a penknife and fling it into the fire.

By the breaking of the potter's vessel in the valley of Hinnom, and again in the Temple courts, Jeremiah sought to shew forth the coming destruction to the people; but the high-priest was the first to turn against him and thrust him into the stocks. No effort at repentance was made, though a fatal superstition caused a reliance on the sanctity of the Temple to linger even in the hearts of those who most profaned it. It was only in the distant future that the prophet could descry any gleam of hope. He foresaw the captivity of his nation, but he foresaw also their restoration after seventy years, and in spite of the utter corruption in his own days of the royal house of David, one bright vision cheered him of the Righteous Branch that should at last spring forth from that stem.

At length, in the eleventh year of his reign, Jehoiakim died a violent death. Most probably the bands which had long been ravaging the country drew nearer and nearer to the city, and the king may have been

¹ Jer. xxxv.

killed in an encounter with them. His body was cast out unburied by them, and he died unlamented by any. Yet perhaps, when the Chaldæans again retired, some of his subjects may have at length interred the body, and thus given rise to the expression that he "slept with his fathers."¹ For three months of trouble the young Jehoiachin² his son reigned. To the prophet's eye he was but "a despised broken idol, a vessel wherein was no pleasure."³ His short reign soon ended, for Nebuchadnezzar himself arrived before Jerusalem, and the young king of Judah seems to have surrendered at discretion. The second captivity now took place. About eleven thousand captives left Jerusalem for Babylon. It was not however the number, but the character of those removed, that chiefly affected the nation. The king, the chief of the nobles, of the soldiers and of the artisans were taken away. Those left were weak and poor, little able to restore the monarchy or protect their country from future invasions. With the train of captives went also the best and noblest spirits yet left, of whom one, Ezekiel, became one of the future prophets of the captivity. The one true prophet left saw a vision of hope for the captives, but the people remaining in Jerusalem were but as a basket of evil figs which could not be eaten, they were so evil.⁴

Once more a puppet king was established in Jerusalem, and by the will of Nebuchadnezzar Zedekiah, another son of Josiah, ascended the throne. His nominal reign of eleven years was a period of continued degradation and decay. The king himself was

¹ Cp. Jer. xxii. 18, 19; 2 Kings xxiv. 6. ² Called also Jeconiah and Coniah.

³ Jer. xxii. 28.

⁴ Jer. xxiv. 8.

singularly weak, and though not without a superstitious reverence for Jeremiah, he "humbled not himself before him speaking from the mouth of the Lord."¹ The king and princes made a covenant with the people, and pledged themselves to release all Jews and Jewesses whom they had enslaved. But they were unable to stand steadfastly by their own promise, and when their immediate fears were past, they basely seized again those who had been set free.² Meanwhile the idolatry of Jerusalem exceeded all that had been seen there before. Within the Temple itself the elders burned incense to the idols painted on the sacred walls, the women wept for the false god Tammuz, and the sun-worshippers adored their god with their faces towards the east.³ The false prophets and prophetesses continued to relate their lying visions, and to raise hopes of a return of captives from Babylon in two years' time. Embassies were sent to Babylon, and Zedekiah himself even journeyed thither in the hope of bringing about this desired end.

It was to no purpose, and Zedekiah, despairing of any success from negotiation, tried again for help from Egypt. He broke his oath that he made to the king of Babylon, and his faithlessness is noted as his crowning offence by the captive prophet Ezekiel.⁴ A feverish hope arose of a deliverance, during the continuance of which Jeremiah was cruelly imprisoned on the charge of "falling away to the Chaldæans." It was the last hope ever entertained in the doomed city. The forces of Egypt, which for a moment had made a diversion in favour of Jerusalem, were withdrawn, and once more the

¹ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.

² Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11.

³ Ezek. viii.

⁴ Ezek. xvii. 15, 16.

city was invested by the army of the king of Babylon. The siege lasted for a year and a half. The "Lamentations" of Jeremiah supply us with a picture of the miseries then endured. There we read of the infants who perished from want of food, of the men grown black from famine, of the parents who devoured even their own children.¹

The end came at last. When famine had done its work in reducing the strength of the defenders, a breach was formed in the walls, and the invaders, entering at midnight, appeared in the Temple courts. The overthrow was complete. Temple and city were destroyed, the king, by a cruel sentence, blinded and imprisoned for life, "and the remnant of the multitude" carried away. Yet still even in this day of judgment the utter corruption of the people left in Judæa is displayed in the murder of Gedaliah, the mild governor appointed over the land, and the forcible removal of Jeremiah to the land of Egypt.²

The hope of the chosen people lay now entirely in the Babylonian captives. These, with their hearts full of sorrow, and depressed, mourned for the disasters of their country. It was in vain for their conquerors to demand from them a song of Zion. They could but hang up their harps on the willows planted beside the watercourses. In their sadness they thought upon their ruined city, and the Temple of their God laid waste and desolate. The worship of that Temple, it may be, they had once despised, but now it was doubly precious to them. For seventy years they were to remain in captivity. The time was long, and many must never hope again to see Jerusalem. So they

¹ Lam iv. 4, 8, 10.

² Jer. xli. xliii.

were to settle themselves quietly in the strange land, and make themselves homes therein.¹

Those seventy years were exceedingly fruitful in regard to the spiritual life of the Jewish nation. The hitherto irrepressible tendency to idolatry was entirely eradicated. The views of the captives and their hopes for the future became more spiritual. Over the past they could but mourn, saying, "O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance; Thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps."² For the future, they were taught to hope, not for the renewal of the covenant, now broken, which had been made with their fathers, but for the establishment of a new one, for a law which should be "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."³

¹ Jer. xxix. 5, 28.

² Psa. lxxix. 1.

³ Jer. xxxi. 31-34; 2 Cor. iii. 3; Heb. viii. 6-13.

A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Of the principal Events in the history of the Children of Israel, from the Exodus to the Christian Era.

NOTE.—The names of Kings are in capitals. The names of contemporary Prophets in italics.

Date B.C.	Scripture Reference.	EVENTS.
1491	Exod. xiv.	Israelites leave Egypt under the leadership of Moses.
1451	Deut. xxxiv.	Moses dies at the end of the 40 years' wandering in the wilderness, and is succeeded by Joshua, who leads the people into the Promised Land.
1095	1 Sam. x.	SAUL anointed King by <i>Samuel</i> .
1055	2 Sam. ii. 2 Sam. v.	DAVID succeeds Saul as King; reigns 7 years at Hebron and 33 at Jerusalem. <i>Nathan; Gad.</i>
1015	1 Kings i.	SOLOMON succeeds David.
1004	1 Kings viii.	The Temple, after $7\frac{1}{2}$ years in building, finished but not dedicated till B.C. 991. ¹
975	1 Kings xii. 2 Chron. x.	REHOBOAM succeeds Solomon. Revolt of the Ten Tribes.

¹ See Manual II. page 92.

Date B.C.	Scripture Reference.	KINGS OF JUDAH FOR 388 YEARS.
975	1 Kings xiv. 2 Chron. xii.	REHOBOAM. Treasures of the Temple carried away by Shishak, 971.
958	1 Kings xv.	ABIJAH (or ABIJAM).
955	2 Chron. xiv.	ASA. Puts away idolatry. Victory over Zerah, the Ethiopian.
945		
914	1 Kings xv. 2 Chron. xvii.	JEHOSHAPHAT; very prosperous.
892(?)	2 Kings iii.	Victory over Mesha, King of Moab: Jehoram regent.
889	2 Kings viii.	JEHORAM; marries Athaliah, daughter of Ahab. Edom revolts.
884		AHAZIAH; accompanies Jehoram of Israel, his uncle, against Hazael, and is slain by Jehu.
883	2 Kings xi.	Six years of usurpation by Athaliah.
877	2 Chron. xxiii.	JOASH. Jehoiada's regency.
840	Matt. xxiii. 35.	Idolatry. Zechariah's martyrdom.
837	2 Kings xiv.	AMAZIAH. Conquers Edom, but is defeated by Jehoash of Israel, who breaks down wall of Jerusalem, and carries off treasures of the Temple.
824		
809	2 Kings xiv. xv. 2 Chron. xxvi.	AZARIAH, or UZZIAH. A reign of great prosperity, and of improvement in arts of war and husbandry. <i>Isaiah</i> and <i>Joel</i> (?) prophesy. Uzziah struck with leprosy for invading priest's office. Jotham regent.
765(?)		
757	2 Kings xv. 2 Chronicles xxvii.	JOTHAM. <i>Micah</i> prophesies.
741	2 Kings xvi. 2 Chronicles xxviii.	AHAZ. Great defeat of Judah by Pekah and Rezin. <i>Isaiah</i> .
726	2 Kings xviii. —xx. 2 Chron. xxix. —xxxii.	HEZEKIAH. Reformation of religion. <i>Isaiah</i>

Date B.C.	Scripture Reference.	KINGS OF ISRAEL FOR 254 YEARS.
975	1 Kings xii.	JEROBOAM made King. Introduces idolatry, and causes Israel to sin.
954	xv.	NADAB. House of Jeroboam destroyed by
953	"	BAASHA, who reigns 23 years.
930	xvi.	ELAH; murdered by
929	"	ZIMRI; burned to death in his palace after seven days.
929	"	OMRI, after a struggle, secures the throne.
918	"	AHAB. Marries Jezebel. Baal-worship introduced. Ministry of <i>Elijah</i> .
897	xxii.	AHAZIAH { Sons of Ahab
896	2 Kings i.	JEHORAM { Elijah taken up to heaven. Ministry of <i>Elisha</i> in this and three following reigns.
883	ix.	JEHU. Destroys Baal out of Israel.
855	xiii.	JEHOAHAZ.
839	xiii. xiv.	JEHOASH. Thrice beats Syrians. Great defeat of Judah under Amaziah.
823	xiii. xiv.	JEROBOAM II. Very able and successful. Restores boundaries of Israel. <i>Jonah, Amos, Hosea</i> . Either there was an interregnum, at the close of this reign, of eleven years, or Jeroboam reigned 52, and not 41, years.
771	xv.	ZECHARIAH, slain by
771	"	SHALLUM, slain by
771	"	MENAHEM. PUL, King of Assyria, puts the land to tribute.
760	"	PEKAHIAH.
758	"	PEKAH. TIGLATH-PILESER invades the land towards end of this reign.
738	"	Nine years' anarchy.
730	xvii.	HOSHEA.
721		Samaria taken. Israel carried into captivity by SHALMANESER.

Date B.C.	Scripture Reference.	KINGS OF JUDAH CONTINUED.
697	2 Kings xxi. 2 Chronicles xxxiii.	MANASSEH. Revives idolatry, but repents towards the close of his reign. <i>Nahum</i> (?).
642		AMON.
640	2 Kings xxii. 2 Chronicles xxxiv.	JOSIAH. Reformation. Defeated and slain by NECHO in the great battle of Megiddo (see note, p. 89). <i>Zephaniah</i> , <i>Habakkuk</i> , and <i>Jeremiah</i> prophesy. <i>Huldah</i> .
609	2 Kings xxiii. 2 Chr. xxxvi.	JEHOAAHAZ, or SHALLUM. Carried captive into Egypt by Necho.
609	„	JEHOIAKIM, brother of Shallum. Some of the people carried captive to Babylon. Amongst them was <i>Daniel</i> . Commencement of the 70 years' captivity. Power of Egypt crushed by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish.
606	Daniel i.	
605	2 Kings xxiv. 7. Jer. xlvi. 2.	JEHOIACHIN, or CONIAH, carried captive to Babylon. <i>Obadiah</i> .
598	2 Kings xxiv. 2 Chronicles xxxvi.	ZEDEKIAH, son of Josiah. <i>Ezekiel</i> . Carried captive. Jerusalem taken. The Temple destroyed. <i>Jeremiah</i> dies.
598	„	
587	2 Kings xxv.	

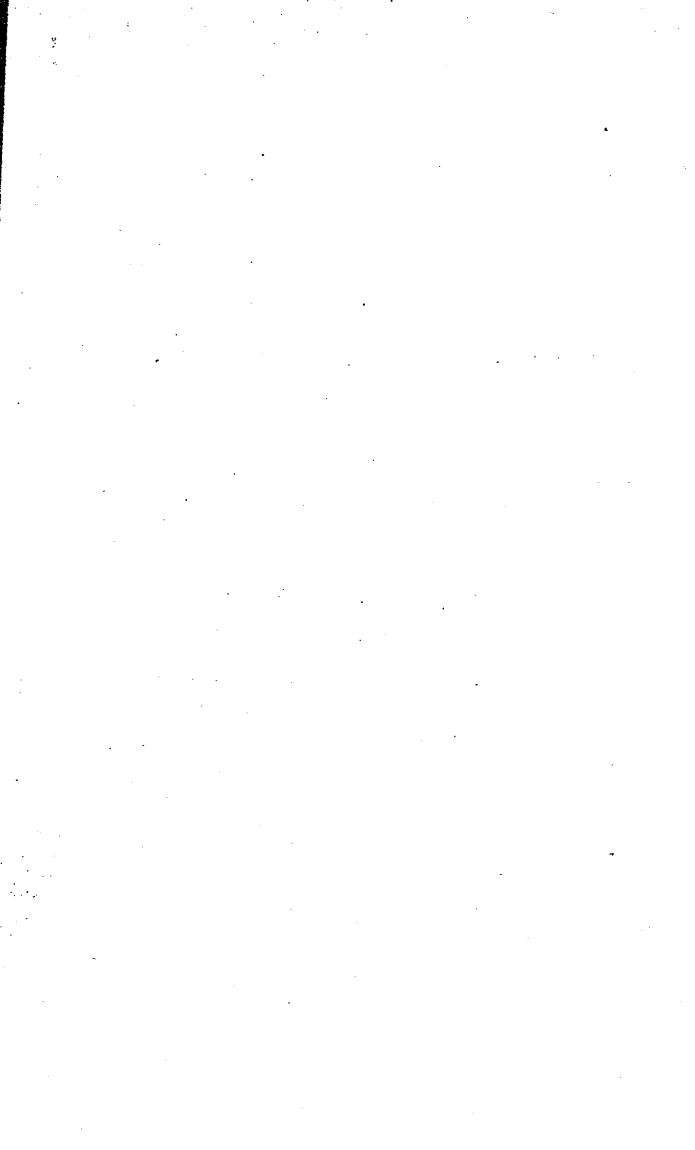
CHRONOLOGY OF THE FIVE CENTURIES

From the close of the Captivity to the Christian Era.

538	Dan. v. 31.	Cyrus takes Babylon, and gives the kingdom to Darius the Mede.
536	2 Chronicles xxxvi. 22. Ezra i. 1.	End of the Captivity. Return of the Jews under Zerubbabel, who lays foundation of the second Temple.

Date B.C.	Scripture Reference.	EVENTS.
535	Ezra iii. 8-13.	<i>Haggai</i> and <i>Zechariah</i> , the prophets of the Return.
519	Ezra vi. 1-12.	Decree of Darius for the completion of the Temple.
515	Ezra vi. 16.	Dedication of the second Temple.
486		Xerxes (the Ahasuerus of Esther), king of Persia.
465		Artaxerxes, king of Persia.
458	Ezra vii. 12.	Ezra's commission to rebuild Jerusalem.
	Dan. ix. 25.	The date from which Daniel's 70 weeks are reckoned.
457		Return of Jews under Ezra.
445	Neh. ii. 6.	Nehemiah sent to Jerusalem.
433	Neh. xiii. 6.	Nehemiah returns to Persia.
428		Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem.
420		<i>Malachi</i> begins to prophesy.
332		Alexander the Great visits Jerusalem.
		Settlement of Jews at Alexandria.
331		Alexander the Great puts an end to the Persian Empire.
323		Death of Alexander.
	Dan. xi. 5.	Ptolemy Soter takes Jerusalem.
		The Jews under the Ptolemies, the Greek kings of Egypt.
283		Ptolemy Philadelphus. Septuagint or Greek Version of Old Testament.
205	Dan. xi. 16.	Holy Land subjugated by the first of the Greek kings of Syria, Antiochus the Great.

Date B.C.	Scripture Reference.	EVENTS.
168	Dan. viii. 9. 1 Macc. i. 2 Macc. v. 11. 1 Macc. ii.	Persecution of Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes. Revolt of Mattathias. The Maccabean struggle.
166	1 Macc. iv. viii.	Judas Maccabæus re-dedicates the Temple. He makes alliance with the Romans.
63		The Romans under Pompey take Jerusalem. The Jews henceforth subject to Rome.
37	Matt. ii. 1.	Herod the Great (an Idumæan) made king of the Jews by the Romans.
18	John ii. 20.	Rebuilding of the Temple begun.
4	Luke ii. 1.	The NATIVITY according to Modern Chronology.



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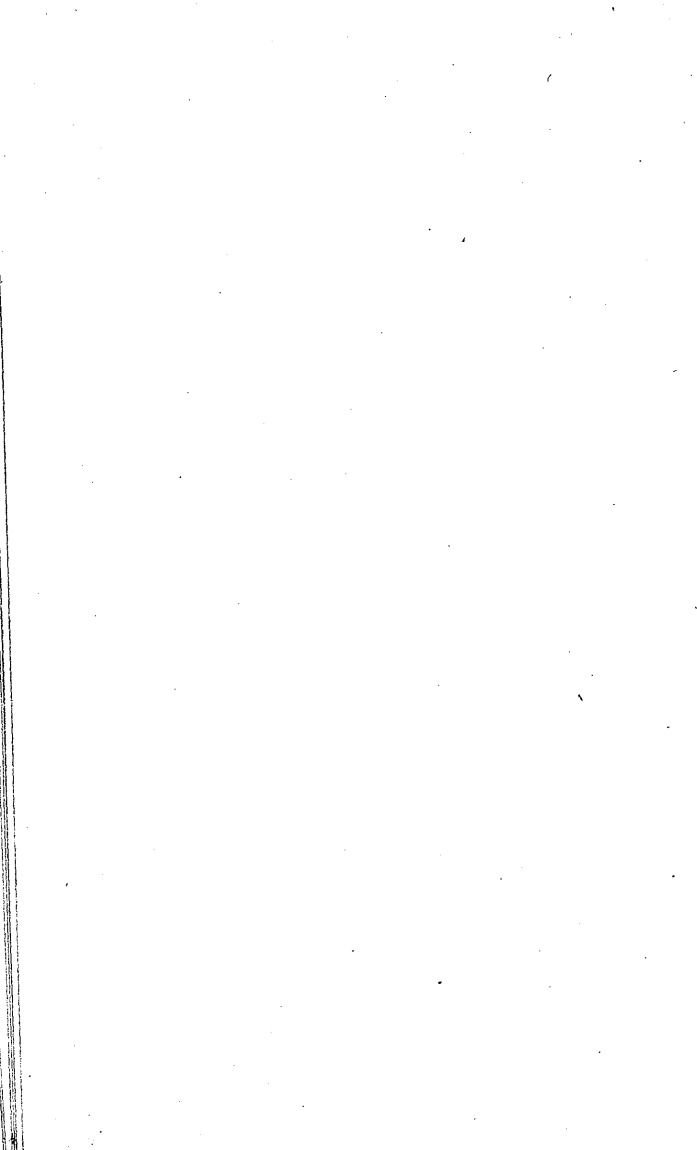
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IN this Manual the divisions of the Psalter in the Prayer Book for use at Morning and Evening Prayer are marked throughout. But the version followed is that of the Bible. Where there is any marked difference between the Bible and Prayer Book versions it is noted.

PART IV.

Fourth Year's Course.

LESSON I.

HEBREW POETRY—THE PSALTER.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE Hebrews were accustomed from the very earliest times to give expression to their feelings, and especially their religious feelings, by means of poetry. The Old Testament, beside having several distinctly poetical books, is full of fragments of poetry, handed down some of them from exceedingly remote times. Of these undoubtedly the two oldest are the short songs of the two Lamechs.¹ There are others also, such as the short hymns with which the setting forward of the Ark and its resting again were accompanied,² the Song or Hymn of the Well,³ and the song of victory over Heshbon.⁴ Beside these shorter compositions, there are several longer and complete poems. Such are the Song of Moses and Miriam after the Exodus,⁵ the grand hymn closing the official life of Moses,⁶ the Song of Deborah,⁷ the Song of Hannah,⁸ the Lament of David over Saul and Jonathan.⁹ In

¹ Gen. iv. 23, 24, v. 29.

³ Numb. xxi. 17, 18.

⁵ Exod. xv.

⁷ Judges v.

⁹ 2 Sam. i. 17-27.

² Numb. x. 35, 36.

⁴ Numb. xxi. 27-30.

⁶ Deut. xxxii.

⁸ 1 Sam. ii.

later times, after David, we have the Hymn of Jonah,¹ the Psalm of Hezekiah,² the Prayer of Habakkuk,³ and the Lamentations of Jeremiah. In fact, there was scarcely any event of importance connected either with national or family life which did not call forth some expression of the poetic feeling so strong within them.

Nor was this national gift of poetry left simply to the guidance of natural instinct. The people had scarcely consolidated their conquest of the Promised Land, when schools of the prophets were established by Samuel, in which, without doubt, one great branch of instruction was the cultivation of poetry and its sister art of music.⁴ It was however under the auspices of David, that the poetry of the Hebrew nation reached its highest development. He himself was the greatest poet of his nation, and by his costly and elaborate arrangements for the music of public worship, he not only took means of the best possible kind to preserve the poetic spirit of the people, but he taught them also how it could find its highest and purest exercise in the praise and adoration of the great Jehovah. And when the nation was in evil plight, or the individual soul depressed and low, he showed them how even then the hymn, or the prayer in the form of a hymn, was the one great refuge and source of comfort.

The poetic spirit of the nation survived all its troubles, so that even during and after the sad times of the Babylonish captivity were written some of the most beautiful and soul-stirring poems in the whole of the Old Testament.

The chief characteristic of Hebrew poetry is what is

¹ Jonah ii.

² Isa. xxxviii.

³ Hab. iii.

⁴ See especially 1 Sam. x. 5-10.

called its *Parallelism*. Very few, if any real traces of rhyme or metre have been found, but this remarkable feature of *Parallelism* is constantly observable. Bishop Lowth defines this to be "the correspondence of one verse or line with another." It is found in the very earliest specimens of Hebrew poetry extant.¹ *Parallelism* assumes a variety of forms, the chief of which are (1) The Direct, (2) The Introverted, (3) The Antithetic, (4) The Constructive.

In the first kind, or direct parallelism, the thought of the first line is repeated in the second, of the third line in the fourth, and so on. An example of this is the following :—

"Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea ;
His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea :
The depths have covered them :
They sank into the bottom as a stone.
Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power ;
Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy."²

And again—

"Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD,
That delighteth greatly in His commandments."³

This kind of parallelism is the most common. In the second or *introverted* kind the first line is parallel to the last, the second to the last but one, and so on. As an instance we may take the following :—

"The idols of the heathen are silver and gold :
The work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they speak not ;
Eyes have they, but they see not

¹ As for instance in the song of the Cainite Lamech, Gen. iv. 23, 24.

² Exod. xv. 4-6.

³ Ps. cxii. 1.

They have ears, but they hear not ;
 Neither is there any breath in their mouths.
 They that make them are like unto them :
 So is every one that trusteth in them."¹

Here we note that the first and eighth lines speak of the heathen who trust in idols; the second and seventh of those who make them; the third and sixth of the idols' mouths; the fourth and fifth of their eyes and ears.

A third and very frequent kind of parallelism, especially in the Proverbs, is the *antithetic*, in which two ideas are contrasted. Thus,—

"A wise son rejoiceth his father :
 But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."²

In the fourth or *constructive* kind of parallelism the correspondence is not one of thought or idea, but consists simply in the form of the sentences. An example of this kind is the following :—

"Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap ;
 Thou shalt tread the olives, but shalt not anoint thee with oil ;
 And sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine."³

Beside this chief feature of Hebrew poetry, there appears frequently a remarkable fondness for acrostics, or an alphabetical arrangement of the verses. The most famous example of this is Ps. cxix., in which there are twenty-two stanzas of eight verses each, the number of stanzas corresponding to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza commences with a new letter, each verse of a stanza begins with the same letter.⁴ The Lamentations of Jeremiah

¹ Ps. cxxxv. 15-18.

² Prov. x. 1.

³ Mic. vi. 15.

⁴ The other alphabetical Psalms are xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii. cxi., cxii., cxix., cxlv., and imperfectly ix., x. This alphabetic order is not preserved in our translations.

offer a remarkable instance of this method of arrangement. The first four chapters are all arranged alphabetically, each verse beginning with a new letter in regular sequence. The third chapter however is divided by stanzas, not verses, each stanza consisting of three verses, in a manner similar to Ps. cxix. The strictly poetical books of the Bible are those of Job, the Psalms, Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, while large passages of the Prophets are also poetical.

In this Manual we shall confine ourselves to the Psalms, the book of all others in the Old Testament dear to the Christian heart.

Gradual formation of the Psalter. The Psalter is divided into five books, which were originally distinct collections.

BOOK.	PSALMS.
I. . . .	I. to XLI.
II. . . .	XLII. to LXXII.
III. . . .	LXXIII. to LXXXIX.
IV. . . .	XC. to CVI.
V. . . .	CVII. to CL.

Of these Books I. and II. were probably collected early in Solomon's reign: they contain about sixty of David's hymns. Book III. was probably collected in the reign of Jehoshaphat or of Hezekiah.¹ The Fourth Book contains for the most part Psalms of the times of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah, but it was not collected apparently till after the Captivity.² The Fifth Book

¹ Cp. 2 Chron. xx. 21, 28, xxix. 30.

² Ps. cii. belongs to the times of the Captivity.

has many Psalms of thanksgiving for the return from the Captivity, and may contain Psalms as late as the time of Malachi. Each book closes with a doxology, added to the last Psalm of the group by the compiler. The doxology of the Fifth Book is composed of the whole of the last Psalm. The arrangement of the Psalms is generally chronological; but some Psalms seem brought together by reason of similarity of subject, or of teaching, or of authorship, or of musical setting.¹

The Titles or Inscriptions. Two-thirds of the Psalms have headings or inscriptions, which relate (1) to the music to which the Psalm was to be sung, or to its liturgical character; (2) to the authorship; (3) to the circumstances under which the Psalm was composed.

It was customary, as it would seem from Jonah ii., Isaiah xxxviii. 9, and Habakkuk iii.,² for the authors of Psalms generally to prefix their names to the Psalms which they composed, and to add frequently some directions for the use of the Psalm or some note of the circumstances under which it was written. David, without doubt, did the same, and others also. Many of the inscriptions are certainly trustworthy, as old as the Psalms themselves. Others are traditional. In some cases there were two traditions, and in their uncertainty which to follow, those who affixed the titles placed both traditions at the head of the Psalm.³ The fact that these inscriptions were already existing

¹ Thus Psalms l. and li. both treat of the spiritual character of all true worship, and for this reason seem to have been placed close together. In like manner the "Songs of Degrees" (Ps. cxx-cxxxiv.) are all placed together.

² See also Gen. iv. 23, xlix. 1, 2; Exod. xv. 1; Deut. xxxi. 30; Judg. v. 1; 1 Sam. ii. 1; 2 Sam. i. 17, xxii. 1, xxiii. 1.

³ See Ps. lxxxviii. and the LXX. version of Ps. cxxxvii. and cxxxviii.

and were even misunderstood, when the Greek translation of the Old Testament was made, proves their high antiquity.

The teaching of the Psalms. Throughout the Psalms great delight is shown in the services of God's Temple, and in the observances of holy times and seasons; but these are felt to be of no avail, unless there goes with them humility of heart and real devotion and adoration of the soul. Occasionally the teaching rises almost, if not quite, to a Christian level, as when in Ps. li., for instance, the necessity for a clean heart, for a broken and a contrite heart, for a broken spirit, is insisted upon.¹ And if at times there is a vehemence of denunciation (as in Ps. cix.) from which the Christian man shrinks, we must remember that the Israelites of the earlier dispensation had not heard the higher teaching of Jesus Christ—"I say unto you, Love your enemies." Upon such passages Dr. Waterland remarks, "He that hath God's authority and extraordinary commission to curse, may do it, must do it;" and he adds, quoting from Bishop Wilkins, "If others shall presume upon it because of their example, they will justly fall under the rebuke of our Saviour, 'Ye know not what spirit ye are of.'"²

The hope of a future life in the Psalms. Our Lord teaches us that the doctrine of a future life was really contained in God's announcement of Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, after their death:³ and the Epistle to the Hebrews shows that the ancient Fathers, Patriarchs, and heroes of the Faith did look

¹ See also Ps. xxxiv. 18.

² Luke ix. 55; see Waterland's *Scripture Vindicated*.

³ Matt. xxii. 32.

forward to a fulfilment after this life of the promises of God made to them, and which they did not realize here.¹ So in the Psalms there are undoubted indications of a hope and belief in a future life animating the hearts of the more spiritual members of the Hebrew people, although this belief did not become an article of *national* faith until the times of the Captivity. That epoch of deep national abasement was the age of the real awakening of hopes and desires for the future, which previous generations did not possess. Yet in such passages as the following we have very clear expressions of the belief of the Psalmist;—"God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me."² "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me into glory."³ "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."⁴

The prophecies concerning our Lord in the Psalms. Psalms containing such prophecies are called Messianic. These Psalms undoubtedly refer in a first sense to David or Solomon or some one else, but in a second and still higher sense they refer, not necessarily in every verse, to the Messiah, sometimes in His exaltation, sometimes in His humiliation. Amongst these Psalms some are pre-eminent prophetic of Christ, and are quoted as such in the New Testament. The second, for instance, is very often alluded to, and distinctly said to be a conscious utterance of David concerning the Messiah.⁵ After the release of Peter and John from prison, the disciples took up the opening

¹ Heb. xi. 13-16.

² Ps. xlix. 15.

³ Ps. lxxiii. 24.

⁴ Ps. lxxiii. 26. The belief is also implied in Ps. xxii. 26, xli. 12, lli. 8, 9, lxiii., cxviii. 17.

⁵ Acts iv. 25.

strain of this Psalm as having been fulfilled in the person of the "Holy Child Jesus." St. Paul, preaching at Antioch, declared that the seventh verse, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee,"¹ had been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead. The same verse is twice quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews as prophetic of the Eternal Sonship and Divinity of our Blessed Lord.² The ninth verse is quoted by our Lord as a promise to him who should overcome for His sake, and of our Lord Himself, as descriptive of His rule over the nations.³ In the "wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 16) we have allusion to the last verse.

Again, in Ps. xxii. we have a wonderfully vivid anticipation of the Redeemer's Passion; in Ps. xlv. the grace, glory and beauty of the Messiah's kingdom is depicted; in Ps. xvi., as both St. Peter and St. Paul teach us,⁴ our Lord's resurrection is prophesied of; Ps. xxiv. and Ps. xlvii. speak of His ascension, while in Psalms xxi., xlv. and cx. we have declared His divine majesty and glory, and the eternity of His priesthood.⁵

Christian use of the Psalms. (1) By the Church. From the earliest times the Christian Church has found in the Psalms a treasure and storehouse of devotion. As early as the second century they were chanted in the public worship of the Church. Ever since, amongst all sections of Christians, the Psalms have occupied a very large space in their services. Nor can we wonder at this, when we consider how the

¹ Acts xiii. 33.

² Heb. i. 5, v. 5.

³ Rev. ii. 27, xix. 15.

⁴ Acts ii. 27, xiii. 35.

⁵ There are many other Messianic Psalms, amongst them are Psalms l., lxix., lxxii.

fortunes of the Hebrew nation, and the inner lives of their saints, are set forth in the Psalms, and express yearnings and hopes, sorrows and joys common to all men, more especially to those who believe in that Divine Lord and Saviour Who died for them and rose again, and Whose sufferings, triumph and glory are so fully spoken of, centuries before, in the prophetic utterances of this most precious Book.

(2) *By individuals.* The Psalms express in a most especial manner the personal religion of those who wrote them. Hence in their depth of sorrow, repentance and suffering; in their heights of exuberant fancy and joy; in their utterances of faith, hope and love, they speak to men of every age. To the sick and sorrowful they are especially precious. "Let there be any grief or disease," says Hooker, "incident unto the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found."¹ God's saints have always found in the Psalms words which expressed better than any others the deepest and most inmost feelings of their hearts. Every age and time of life finds in them that which specially suits itself. To the young this book teaches many a lesson and affords many a help.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful:
But his delight is in the law of the LORD;
And in His law doth he meditate day and night."²

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."³

¹ *Eccl. Polity*, v. 37.

² Ps. i. 1, 2.

³ Ps. cxix. 9.

LESSON II.

NOTE.—The following abbreviations are used. A. V.=Authorized Version; P. B. V.=Prayer Book Version; LXX.=Septuagint, or Greek Translation used by the Apostles.

FIRST DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM I.

Historical occasion. This Psalm contains no direct reference to the history of the Israelites, but may be regarded as an introduction to the whole Psalter. 1-3. The blessedness of the righteous; 4-6. The unhappiness of the wicked.

Christian application. The Psalm describes the beauty of the spiritual life, and reminds us in its opening of both the commencement and the close of the Sermon on the Mount.

3. Very forcible to a dweller in a hot dry country. Meditation in God's law advances personal holiness, out of which spring the fruits of the Spirit. Cp. Jer. xvii. 7, 8; Gal. v. 22-25; Rev. xxii. 2.

6. *Knoweth.* Watches over. Ps. xxxi. 7; Job xxiii. 10.

PSALM II.

Historical occasion. Doubtful. Perhaps written by David when the Syrians and Ammonites threatened him (2 Sam. viii). It is dramatic. 1-3. A chorus or singer; 4-6. Jehovah speaks; 7-9. Messiah announces

His commission ; 10-12. The chorus or singer warns the enemies of the Messiah (or Christ) to submit.

Christian application. The words clearly point to the Messiah, to Whom it is referred in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews ; Acts iv. 25 ; Heb. i. 5. It is a proper Psalm for Easter Day.

2. *His Anointed.* His Messiah or Christ. Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 10.

12. *Kiss the Son.* Do homage to the Son.

PSALM III.

Historical occasion. Absalom's rebellion seems to have been the occasion of this Psalm. It is, at any rate, a morning hymn (ver. 5), after a day of trouble, and what would have been a night of anxiety but for the sense of God's care. It may be divided into four parts : (1) declaration of trouble (1, 2) ; (2) refuge in the trouble (3, 4) ; (3) happy result of the refuge (5, 6) ; (4) prayer for help (7, 8).

Christian application. Christ's disciples may understand this Psalm as spoken by their Lord in His sufferings and agony, Christ speaking in the person of David.

1. *How many, etc.* The greater part of the nation. Cp. 2 Sam. xvi. 15, xvii. 1, 11-13.

6. *Set themselves.* A military phrase. 1 Sam. xvii. 2 ; 1 Kings xx. 12.

PSALM IV.

Historical occasion. Very probably the same as that of the preceding Psalm. It is an evening hymn (ver. 8). 1. Prayer ; 2-5. Warning to enemies ; 6-8. His Trust in God fills the Psalmist with peace.

Christian application. The Psalm reminds the

Christian of the true refuge in distress, and of Christ the true Light (ver. 6).

1. *God of my righteousness*.—Thou who knowest and maintainest my righteousness against mine enemies. Ps. lix. 10.

4. *Stand in awe*. Tremble. Quoted by St. Paul from the LXX. in Eph. iv. 26.

5. *Sacrifices of righteousness*. Such as will be acceptable with God. Ps. li. 17.

6. *There be many*. All the Psalmist's despondent friends.

8. *Both*. David so trusts in God, that the moment he lies down he goes to sleep.

PSALM V.

Historical occasion. None apparent. It is a morning hymn (ver. 3). 1, 2. An introduction; 3-7. The good man addresses God with confidence; 8-12. The prayer offered by the Psalmist.

Christian application. Resort to prayer and the ordinances of God's house are the Christian's true resource in times of trial.

1, 2. Prayer to be heard. *Meditation*, silent prayer; *voice of my cry*, audible prayer.

7. *Thy House*.—*Thy Holy Temple*. Not the Temple of Solomon, but the Sanctuary at Shiloh. 1 Sam. i. 9, iii. 3. But David may be using the words of God's spiritual presence in the soul.

9. Quoted by St. Paul, Rom. iii. 13.

12. *Shield*. The large shield, serving as a defence for the whole body. 1 Sam. xvii. 7.

FIRST DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM VI.

Historical occasion. Perhaps some time of bodily sickness, brought on by mental anxiety. 1-7. Prayer for deliverance in the time of trouble; 8-10. Joyful assurance that the prayer has been heard.

Christian application. A confession of sin, and a prayer for deliverance from spiritual enemies. It is the first of the so-called Penitential Psalms, and is appointed by the Church for use on Ash-Wednesday.

1. Repeated by Jeremiah (x. 24).

3. *My soul.* The sickness of the body affects the soul. Cp. John xii. 27; Ps. xlii. 6, 7.

How long? Ps. lxxix. 5.

5. The Old Testament saint had not that assured sense of the life everlasting which the Christian has (2 Tim. i. 10). He seems specially to have dreaded an early death. Cp. Ps. xxx. 9, lxxxviii. 11, etc.; Isa. xxxviii. 18.

6, 7. Express the agonies of the soul in its wrestlings with sin and faithlessness.

PSALM VII.

Historical occasion. This is perhaps to be found in 1 Sam. xxiv. or 1 Sam. xxvi., but who Cush was is quite uncertain: probably he was one of Saul's party. 1, 2. David confiding in God; 3-5. asserts his innocence; and 6-10. appeals to God to judge him and his enemies; 11-16. The manner in which God deals with the wicked.

Christian application. Jesus-Christ is the true refuge of faithful souls (Matt. xi. 28-30). In the great

day of judgment God's righteous government over the world will be vindicated.

4. *Yea, I have delivered.* Better, "yea, rather, I have delivered." See 1 Sam. xxiv., xxvi.

7. *For their sakes.* Rather "above it," *i.e.* above the congregation. God is represented as coming down to earth, and gathering all nations around Him for judgment; when judgment has been delivered He returns on high above them. Cp. Gen. xi. 5, 7, xviii. 21; Isa. lxiv. 1.

12. *If he turn not.* "If a man turn not," as in Prayer Book.

15, 16. The evil-doer works his own punishment. Cp. 1 Sam. xxv. 39.

PSALM VIII.

Historical occasion. Written probably in David's early life, when a shepherd-boy at Bethlehem.

Christian application. The Psalm anticipates the Angel's song in Luke ii. 14, and verses 4-6 are applied to Christ in 1 Cor. xv. 27; Heb. ii. 6-9. It is thus very rightly appointed for use on Ascension Day.

2. *Ordained strength.* In LXX. it is "perfected praise," which is quoted by our Lord, Matt. xxi. 16.

5. *Than the angels.* So the LXX. and Heb. ii. 7, 9, which quotes from it. But the Heb. has "than God."

SECOND DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM IX.

Historical occasion. Quite uncertain, but the obscurity of the title "Muth-labben," or "Death of the Son," witnesses to its great antiquity.

It is one of the eight alphabetical Psalms, in which each verse, or set of verses, begins with a different letter, generally in strict alphabetical order.

Christian application. The Church rejoices, in this Psalm, in the destruction of the enemies of the Truth, and praises her Redeemer and Saviour.

6. *O thou enemy, etc.* Better, "The enemy are perished, they are desolations for ever," such as Sodom, Gomorrha, Nineveh, Babylon. Cp. Rev. xviii. 19-21.

12. *Maketh inquisition for blood.* Acts the part of the "avenger of blood." Gen. ix. 5.

14. *In the gates.* In the most public place, in the market-place, as we might say in England.

The Daughter of Zion. An expression for God's Church and her members.

17. *Shall be turned into hell.* Must return to the unseen place (Hades). The idea is that of returning to the dust (Gen. iii. 19), not of final judgment.

PSALM X.

Historical occasion. Uncertain. The Psalm is anonymous. Joined by the LXX. with Ps. ix. as one Psalm. But they are really two. 1. Prayer to Jehovah in time of distress; 2-11. Condition and character of the ungodly described; 12-18. Prayer to God to arise and show Himself the true God.

Christian application. The Church, suffering from the spirit of Antichrist, makes her prayer to God.

4. "All his thoughts are, There is no God," as in the margin, is the best translation.

8. *Villages.* Unwalled towns, specially open to attack.

10. *His strong ones.* His claws.

14. *Thou hast seen it.* In contrast with ver. 11.

16. *Perished out of His land.* Refers perhaps to the overthrow of some of those heathen communities left in the country after its subjugation by Joshua.

PSALM XI.

Historical occasion. Written probably when the rebellion of Absalom was preparing, but the advice referred to in ver. 1 was as yet premature. Others refer its composition to the troubles of David in Saul's reign, and ver. 2 appears rather to countenance this. It may be thus divided ;—1-3. His trust in Jehovah causes David to reject the timid counsels of his friends ; 4-7. The answer of the believer to the question in ver. 3.

Christian application. The Psalm teaches the Christian that he should continue doing his duty, whatever perils may surround him, trusting in the shield of faith in God, Who remains unchangeable. Cp. Hab. ii. 20.

3. *The foundations.* If all justice be overthrown.

5. *Trieth.* Cp. Gen. xxii. 1 ; Job xxiii. 10.

7. *His countenance doth behold.* Rather, "the upright shall behold His countenance," an expression of hope in a future life.

SECOND DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XII.

Historical occasion. Quite uncertain. A Psalm of David. It is dramatic ;—1-4. The singer complains to Jehovah ; 5. Jehovah answers ; 6-8. The singer expresses his faith in Jehovah's promise, and his hope for the future.

Christian application. When faith is waning, the Church must betake herself to prayer; for, whatever the world may say, the Word of Jehovah is pure and tried.

1. For similar complaints about human society, see Isa. lvii. 1; Jer. vii. 28; Mic. vii. 2.

2. For the opposite virtue, cp. Eph. iv. 25.

With a double heart. Lit. "With a heart and a heart," i.e. putting one reason forward, keeping the real one back.

7. *From this generation.* Or, as we might say, from the vices of the society of our time.

PSALM XIII.

Historical occasion. Perhaps may be found in the circumstances described in 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

Christian application. The Psalm may be well used by the Church, or any one of her members, in times of trial and temptation.

3. *Lighten mine eyes:* Not his spiritual, but his bodily eyes. Cp. 1 Sam. xiv. 27, 29.

PSALM XIV.

Historical occasion. Uncertain, as is that of Ps. liii., which is a kind of second edition of this. It describes, 1. The state of society; 2-7. Jehovah comes down from heaven to see, and records what He sees. Cp. Gen. vi. 11, 12.

Christian application. The Psalm teaches us that God takes note of all things, even of "idle words."

1. *The fool.* The man who has cast off God, and who, though he claim wisdom and understanding, is really a simpleton. Cp. Isa. xxxii. 6.

3. After this verse the P. B. V., following the Latin, inserts three verses (5, 6, 7), the eighth verse of the P. B. corresponding to the fourth in the Bible.¹ St. Paul quotes freely (Rom. iii. 10, etc.) the first three verses of this Psalm, and then brings together several passages from other parts of the O. T.

4. *As they eat bread, i.e.* with the same indifference. Mic. iii. 1-3.

5. *Generation of the righteous.* In the worst of times God always has some witnesses. Cp. 1 Kings xix. 18.

7. *The captivity.* Implies perhaps either that the Psalm was not composed by David, but in the times of the captivity, or that some later hand (as Jeremiah's) added this last verse. But the expression is used of any release from misfortune. Job xlii. 10.

¹ The same three verses are also found in this place in some MSS. of the LXX.

LESSON III.

THIRD DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XV.

Historical occasion. The removal of the Ark to Zion. 2 Sam. vi. 12-19; 1 Chron. xv. 16. The Psalm describes the righteous man positively, 2-4, what he is; and negatively, 4-5, what he is not. Cp. Isa. xxxiii. 14-16, and Ep. of St. James.

Christian application. As we read we think of our Lord gone up on high and dwelling in heaven. It is a proper Psalm for Ascension Day.

1. *Tabernacle;—Holy Hill.* As there could be no literal dwelling in these, the words reach forward to New Testament times, and have a spiritual meaning, anticipating John iv. 21-24.

PSALM XVI.

Historical occasion. Doubtful; but the Psalm expresses the feelings of one who is trying to be a witness for God in the midst of the heathen or unbelievers.

Christian application. Very important, for St. Peter tells us (Acts ii. 30, 31) that David wrote the Psalm as a prophet, and was conscious that he was speaking in the person of that Messiah Whom God had promised.

2. *My goodness extendeth not to Thee.* Either (1) as P. B. V. God is in no need of the goodness, or goods, of the singer; or (2) all the good the singer has comes from God.

5. *Mine inheritance.* An allusion probably to division of land by Joshua. But it is true spiritually of each servant of God.

6. *The lines.* Allusion to ancient custom of marking out property by lines. Cp. Mic. ii. 5.

7. *My reins.* My heart.

9. *My glory.* My soul. The heart, soul and flesh make up the whole man.

10. *Hell.* The unseen place, Hades.

11. *The path of life.* A joyous anticipation of the future life, and of full union with God; the strongest expression of a belief in immortality before the time of Isaiah.

PSALM XVII.

Historical occasion. When David was persecuted by Saul. Cp. 1 Sam. xxiii.

Christian application. The Psalm may be used as the expression of trust in God, in time of danger.

8. *The apple of the eye.* The pupil of the eye, which is set in the iris, and protected by eyelashes and eyebrows. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 10; Zech. ii. 8.

14. Cp. Luke xvi. 8, 25. The portion of the wicked passes away.

15. The portion of the righteous abides. This verse and Ps. xvi. 11 show that David believed in the future life, though it was not an article of the national faith.

THIRD DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XVIII.

Historical occasion. Composed by David towards the close of his life. See 2 Sam. xxii., which contains another edition of this Psalm.

Christian application. From the quotation made by St. Paul of ver. 49, in Rom. xv. 9, we may understand this Psalm as prophetic of the work of our Lord, His sufferings, and His triumph.

2. The expressions, "My rock," etc., in this verse recall the martial character of David's past life. They show all that God has been to him.

6. *His temple.* Heaven.

7. God answers His servants' prayer; there is (1) the earthquake (ver. 7); (2) the gathering storm, the lightning (ver. 8), clouds (ver. 9), the gale of wind (ver. 10); (3) The storm bursts forth, hail, thunder, lightning (vv. 11-14).

28. *My candle.* Or lamp, emblem of life and prosperity.

35. God gave David swiftness of foot (vv. 33, 36 37), and great strength (34, 38), but his true defence and shield is God Himself (35, 39), Who has stooped to help him. "Thy gentleness (or, meekness) hath made me great."

49. *Among the heathen.* Prophetic (Rom. xv. 9) of Christ's work among the Gentiles, as well as the Jews.

FOURTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XIX.

Historical occasion. Uncertain; the Psalm pictures the feelings and thoughts of one watching a gorgeous Eastern sunrise. The Psalmist thinks, 1-6, of God's glory as witnessed by the heavens, continuously (ver. 2), silently (ver. 3), universally (ver. 4), and especially by the sun (vv. 5, 6). and then, 7-14, of God's glory, as witnessed by His revelation of Himself to man in the Law of Moses.

Christian application. Following St. Paul (Acts xiv. 17; Rom. i. 20), the Church uses this Psalm on Christmas Day, as prophetic of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, when the glory of God was so wonderfully shown, and the Angels sang of it.

3. *Where.* The marginal rendering is better. The meaning is, that though the heavenly bodies have no human speech or words with which to inculcate their lessons, yet that they do speak with an intelligible, though inaudible voice, to the pious heart.

4. *Their line.* The measuring line (cp. Isa. xxxiv. 17; Job xxxviii. 5; Jer. xxxi. 39), and hence rule, decree, law (as in Isa. xxviii. 10), which seems to be the meaning here. The P. B. V. "sound" follows the LXX. and Latin Versions. It gives a good sense, but is not according to the Hebrew.

7-11. Describe the glorious effect of God's Word on the heart (cp. 2 Tim. iii. 15). It not only reveals God to the soul, but acts as "a mirror of self-knowledge," by which a man may learn to know himself, and

12-14. Become conscious of sin. Thus the silent teaching of the heavenly bodies, imparting lessons to all the world (ver. 4), is paralleled by the silent teaching of God's Word or Law in the heart of the believer. See St. Paul's use of the fourth verse, Rom. x. 18.

13. *Presumptuous sins.* Deliberate, wilful sin against knowledge.

PSALM XX.

Historical occasion. Perhaps that of the Syro-Ammonitish war (2 Sam. x—xii.). It was intended for use in the Temple worship. The Psalm is dramatic. 1-5. The people, led perhaps by the Levites, sing a Litany for the King, who is offering sacrifices; 6-8. A solo voice, perhaps that of the King himself, declares the offering has been accepted, and exhorts to trust in God; 9. The whole congregation again sing in chorus.

Christian application. Prophetic of Christ in His

office as King of His people. The Church, pleading His sacrifice, may use this Psalm.

5. *Thy salvation.* Not God's, but that wrought by the King for his people, by his success in war. In Ps. xxi. 1 it is the salvation wrought by God.

6. *His anointed.* (1) The King, (2) Jesus Christ.

9. The P. B. V. is better, though perhaps the best rendering would be

"O Lord, save the king.

Answer us, when we cry (unto Thee)."

PSALM XXI.

Historical occasion. Not improbably the success in war granted to the prayer of the last Psalm. Intended for Temple worship.

Christian application. Prophetic of Christ's victory and triumph over all His enemies, and therefore most appropriately appointed for use on Ascension Day.

1. *The King.* The older Jewish commentators understood the King Messiah.

3. *Thou preventest.* Old English word for "going before." *A crown of pure gold.* Reference perhaps to the splendid crown, set with precious stones, of the Ammonite king, which was set on David's head (2 Sam. xii. 30).

4. *For ever and ever.* Most true of Jesus Christ, but yet an expression often used to earthly kings. See 1 Kings i. 31; Dan. iii. 9, etc.

9. *A fiery oven.* Probably means as if they were in an oven, and so utterly consumed.

FOURTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XXII.

Historical occasion. Doubtful; but the Psalm is certainly David's, written at a time of affliction.

Christian application. This Psalm is very precious to the Christian, because of the use made of it by our Lord on the Cross, and because of its most exact prophetic description of His sufferings there. It is most rightly appointed for use on Good Friday.

1. See Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34.

6. Cp. Isa. lii. 14, liii. 3.

7, 8. The scorn of the spectators. Matt. xxvii. 39 40; Mark xv. 29-32; Luke xxiii. 35.

12. *Bashan.* The fertile land of Og, celebrated for its cattle, on the east of Jordan (Deut. xxxii. 14; Amos iv. 1). These animals, bulls, lions (13, 21), dogs (16, 20), unicorns (21), represent by their strength and fierceness the malevolence and hatred of the Psalmist's enemies, and so the scorn and bitterness with which the Scribes and Pharisees hurled reproaches and insults on Jesus Christ.

15. *My tongue cleaveth to my jaws.* Intense thirst. Cp. Ps. lxix. 21; John xix. 28.

18. *They part my garments.* See Matt. xxvii. 35, etc.

20. *My darling.* Literally, My only one, that which I hold most dear, and hence my life. Cp. Ps. xxxv. 17.

21. *Thou hast heard, etc. i.e.* Thou hast delivered me from them. *Unicorns*, probably buffaloes.

22. Messiah is here calling those whom He has redeemed His brethren. See Heb. ii. 11, 12.

26. Refers to the thankful eating of the peace-offering. Lev. vii. 15.

They that be fat, i.e. rich and powerful. Isa. xxv. 6.

PSALM XXIII.

Historical occasion. Probably some event in David's life as a shepherd boy, but some would refer it to the later part of his life (v. 4). Cp. Gen. xlix. 24; Ps. lxxx. 1.

Christian application. The Psalm reminds us of our Lord's description of Himself as the Good Shepherd (John x. 1-16), and of His charge to St. Peter (John xxi. 15-17; cp. Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 25, v. 4).

2. *He leadeth me.* The Eastern shepherds lead, and do not drive their sheep.

3. *Paths of righteousness.* Straight, level paths.

4. *The valley of the shadow of death.* Literally, the deep valleys of the Holy Land, through which the shepherd has sometimes to lead his sheep, are full of danger from wild beasts, etc. Spiritually we see here the fearlessness with which the Christian can face the frequent "perils of death" in which he is placed, and still more, death itself.

5. *Thou preparest a table.* Spiritually, as most of the old writers teach, the means of grace, especially the Sacraments, which God gives us through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Enemies.* A reminiscence of past trials. So the Christian may say of his spiritual foes.

FIFTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XXIV.

Historical occasion. The bringing up the Ark from Kirjath-jearim, where it had lain neglected for fully half a century, to Jerusalem, the recently captured stronghold of the Jebusites, and now the capital city of Israel. It was a day of intense rejoicing to David and his people (1 Chron. xv. xvi.).

Christian application. The Psalm is prophetic of our Lord's ascension into Heaven, and is therefore appointed as a proper Psalm for Ascension Day.

The Psalm is dramatic.

1, 2. Sung in chorus by the procession of Priests, Levites, and people accompanying the Ark.

3. A single voice, or perhaps half the chorus.
4. Another voice, or the other half of the chorus.
- 5-7. Full chorus.
8. Chorus of people within the city gates.
- 8, 9. Full chorus as before.
10. The voices within the city, and then one grand chorus as the procession enters.

PSALM XXV. (An Alphabetical Psalm.)

Historical occasion. Some time of distress and weakness. The last verse was probably added by a later hand, to fit the Psalm for use in the Temple worship.

Christian application. The Church, or any one of her members, prays for deliverance from spiritual enemies, for mercy, and spiritual guidance.

14. *The secret of the Lord.* Implies confidential intercourse, such as Abraham's. See Gen. xviii. 17.

PSALM XXVI.

Historical occasion. Perhaps Absalom's rebellion. The Psalmist asserts his uprightness, and prays for help and mercy.

Christian application. The Psalm may be used as an acknowledgment of God's mercy in enabling any to walk in integrity. "By the grace of God I am what I am," says St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 10).

1. *Integrity.* Uprightness of heart, a good conscience.

6. *I will wash my hands, etc.* Cp. Deut. xxi. 6; Matt. xxvii. 24. For Christian application see 1 Cor. xi. 28.

FIFTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XXVII.

Historical occasion. Perhaps (as the last) Absa-

lom's rebellion; or according to some ancient versions, just before David was anointed king of Israel and Judah at Hebron (2 Sam. v. 3).

Christian application. The Christian may use the Psalm as an expression of confidence in God, and a prayer for guidance and patience.

4. *The beauty of the Lord.* With reference probably to (1) the services of the Sanctuary, (2) to the spiritual insight of faith.

Temple. The Tabernacle which David had pitched for the Ark in Zion (see ver. 5 and 2 Sam. vi. 17). So *pavilion* in ver. 5.

5. *He shall hide me.* The Tabernacle enshrining the Ark was the symbol to David, as God's House and Church are to the Christian, of God's presence and protecting care.

8. *My heart said, etc.* The P. B. V. conveys better the order of the words. David seems to hear God speaking to him.

13. *I had fainted.* Not in Hebrew, but necessary to give the sense, which it does well.

14. *He shall strengthen, etc.* Rather, let thy heart be strong.

PSALM XXVIII.

Historical occasion. The same probably as that of the preceding.

Christian application. To the Christian it is a prayer for guidance, and towards its close a hymn of praise and trustfulness.

2. *Thy holy oracle.* The Holy of Holies. The word only occurs here, and in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. See 1 Kings vi. 5, 19-22; 2 Chron. iii. 16, etc.

9. *Feed them.* Again the idea of God as the Shepherd of His people. Cp. Isa. xl. 11.

PSALM XXIX.

Historical occasion. A great thunderstorm, sweeping over Palestine from Lebanon on the north to Kadesh on the south. The thunder is the Voice of Jehovah, crashing amidst the lofty cedars of Lebanon, and the rocks and valleys of the southern land.

Christian application. To the Christian the Psalm expresses the great work of the Word of God over the hearts of men.

1. *O ye mighty.* Literally, Ye sons of God, *i.e.* the angels. The "young rams" of P. B. V. is wrong.

2. *The beauty of holiness.* Rather, "Holy garments." The angels are supposed to be clothed in priestly vestments, even as the Priests and Levites were arrayed on earth. Cp. 2 Chron. xx. 21.

6. *Sirion.* Anti-Lebanon, or Hermon. Deut. iii. 9. *Skip.* Tremble, shake.

7. *Divideth.* Descriptive of forked lightning.

8. *Kadesh.* In extreme south of Palestine.

9. *Maketh the hinds to calve.* Their being frightened by the storm causes the hinds to drop their young prematurely. A fact noted by Eastern writers.

Discovereth. Lays bare the branches by stripping them of their foliage.

10. *The flood.* The rain has come down in such torrents that the Psalmist is reminded, when he sees the effects, of the Deluge. This is the only passage where the word used in Genesis to describe the Deluge occurs elsewhere.

LESSON IV.

SIXTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XXX.

Historical occasion. Recovery from a sickness, which had probably delayed David in the dedication of his house. See Inscription; 2 Sam. v. 11. The house may however well mean the Tabernacle which David pitched for the Ark.¹ 2 Sam. vi. 17.

Christian application. May be fitly used in all times of sickness and trial, and of deliverance.

9-10. The words of David's prayer. Cp. Hezekiah's prayer, Isa. xxxviii. "In the Old Testament, Hades was as yet unvanquished, Heaven was not yet opened."²

12. *My glory.* My soul.

PSALM XXXI.

Historical occasion. Probably David's flight from Saul to the wilderness of Maon. 1 Sam. xxiii. 24-26. He recounts his sufferings, and prays for grace and mercy.

Christian application. He who is in trouble may commit himself into God's hands, in the words of this Psalm, even as our Lord did (Luke xxiii. 46).

1-3. Cp. Ps. lxxi. 1-3.

5. *Into Thy hands, etc.* A faithful placing of himself by David in God's hands. But our Lord's use of these

¹ See Manual II., p. 71.

² Delitsch.

words has given them a higher meaning. In His mouth they are the expression of the free will with which He gave up His life.

13. Quoted by Jer. xx. 10. ..

15. *My times.* The vicissitudes and changes of my life are all in Thy keeping. Cp. 1 Chron. xxix. 30.

19. *Laid up.* Cp. Prov. ii. 7, and "the hidden manna" of Rev. ii. 17; see also Ps. xvii. 14.

20. *In the secret of Thy presence, i.e.* in Thine own habitation, which is hidden from the eyes of men. A very striking expression, as if the brightest place gave the most entire safety. And so it really is. Cp. Exod. xiv. 20. Man fears not man's frown when he has the sense of God's secret approval in his heart, and feels Him near.

21. *In a strong city.* Fenced city. Perhaps Ziklag. Or it may be simply a metaphor for a place of safety.

SIXTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XXXII.

Historical occasion. The Psalm connects itself with David's repentance after his great sin (2 Sam. xii. 1-13). With the record (vv. 1-7) of the blessedness of confession made and forgiveness obtained, we may compare Prov. xxviii. 13; Rom. iv. 8; 1 John i. 8, 9. It is the second of the Penitential Psalms.

Christian application. An ancient version calls this Psalm "a prophecy of Christ by Whom we are delivered from the pains of hell." St. Paul also uses it (Rom. iv. 6-9) to show that God pardons freely, upon true faith and repentance. A proper Psalm for Ash-Wednesday.

2. *In whose spirit there is no guile.* Cp. John i. 47; Rev. xiv. 5. There is no true penitence where there is reservation in confession.

3, 4. Describe the workings of David's conscience during the year that he kept silence about his sin.

5. See 2 Sam. xii. 13.

9. *Whose mouth.* Rather, "whose harness." The bit and bridle are for curbing and compelling obedience.

PSALM XXXIII.

Historical occasion. Uncertain, but perhaps, as some think, written as a continuation of Ps. xxxii. It is an exhortation to praise God, and that for three reasons; (1) Because He is the Creator of all things; (2) Because He governs all things; (3) Because He watches over and protects His servants.

Christian application. A hymn of rejoicing for the mercies of Redemption.

6. Cp. Heb. xi. 3; 2 Pet. iii. 5.

7. *He gathereth the waters.* Cp. Gen. i. 6-10; Ex. xv. 8; Josh. iii. 13, 16. 9. Gen. i. 3.

15. God, as their Creator, knoweth men's hearts. John ii. 25.

PSALM XXXIV. (An Alphabetical Psalm.)

Historical occasion. If the inscription is correct, the occasion is to be found in 1 Sam. xxi. 13.¹

Christian application. To celebrate Christ's victory over, and our own deliverance through Him from, our spiritual enemies. It is a sweet Psalm of trustful love, always full of freshness, never out of date.

6. *This poor man.* The Psalmist himself.

¹ Abimelech was the official title, Achish the personal name. This shows that the writer of the inscription obtained his information from some source other than 1 Sam. xxi.

7. *The angel of the Lord.* Here an angel of mercy; in Ps. xxxv. 5 of judgment. *Encampeth.* Cp. Gen. xxxii. 1; 2 Kings vi. 17.

8. *O taste and see.* 1 Pet. ii. 3.

12-16. Quoted by St. Peter (1 Ep. iii. 10-12) as the rule of the Christian, imitating the patience of his Divine Lord.

SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XXXV.

Historical occasion. Perhaps Saul's persecution of David (see especially 1 Sam. xxiv. 15, compared with ver. 1 of Psalm); or Absalom's rebellion.

Christian application. Our Lord shows (John xv. 25) that the Psalm is prophetic of Himself. In this Psalm however, as in many others, we must beware of supposing that every verse applies to Jesus Christ because some of the verses undoubtedly do so. In this Psalm, such verses as 4-8 must be regarded as judicial, "designed to deter men from presuming on God's mercy, and forgetting His judgments."¹

7. *Their net in a pit.* Wild animals were caught in nets concealed in pits, which were covered lightly with sticks, grass, etc.

17. *My darling.* Ps. xxii. 20, where see note.

21. Compare Mark xv. 29.

PSALM XXXVI.

Historical occasion. Quite doubtful.

Christian application. May be used as prophetic of the blessings we enjoy through Christ (ver. 9), and of His victories.

¹ Wordsworth.

1. The P. B. V. is here the plainer. But it would be better if rendered, "The wicked hath an utterance of sin in his heart," sin being represented as a person within him, addressing the man, and suggesting evil to him.

6. *The great (or, strong, P. B. V.) mountains.* Literally, the mountains of God. So of the cedars (Ps. lxxx. 10); cp. also Ps. lxxv. 10; Gen. xiii. 10.

8, 9. *The fountain of life.* Cp. John iv. 14, vii. 37, 38; Rev. vii. 17, which passages are anticipated in these far-reaching words of the Psalmist. Cp. also Dan. ii. 22; 1 John i. 5, 7.

SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XXXVII. (An Alphabetical Psalm.)

Historical occasion. Written probably in David's old age, and giving a summary of his experience. Its words (ver. 16) are re-echoed in such passages as Prov. xv. 16, xvi. 8.

Christian application. The Psalm teaches us to leave things in God's hands. His ways may be mysterious to us, but present discomfort and anxiety for the future are alike to give way to trust and rest in Jehovah.

7. P. B. V. very good here,—“Hold thee still in the Lord;” *i.e.* Be patient and tranquil in God's hands.

8. *Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.* Rather, only to do evil. The result of fretting would be that thou wouldest do evil thyself, whereas God says “Avenge not thyself.” Heb. x. 30; Rom. xii. 19; Deut. xxxii. 35.

11. See also ver. 29, and cp. Matt. v. 5. Cp. also vv. 25 and 29 of this Psalm and Matt. xix. 28, 29.

20. *The fat of lambs.* Literally, the glory of lambs; *i.e.* the fine rich grass and flowers of the pastures. Cp. Isa. xxx. 23; Ps. lxxv. 13, where the same word occurs in the sense of *pastures* which is here rendered *lambs*.

35. *A green bay tree.* Rather, "a green tree deeply rooted," in its native soil, no mere exotic.

37. The A. V. of this verse is preferable to the P. B. V. (ver. 38), which however follows some of the old versions.

EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XXXVIII.

Historical occasion. Another probably of the Psalms of David's old age; its words point to such circumstances as his own bodily weakness, and the rebellion of Adonijah, Abiathar, and Joab.¹

Christian application. As a penitential Psalm, appointed for Ash-Wednesday, it expresses the sense of sin oppressing the heart. It is prophetic also of Christ's sufferings (ver. 11; cp. Luke xxiii. 49).

7. *Loathsome disease.* Rather, burning; a symptom of fever.

8. *I am feeble.* Cp. 1 Kings i. 1-4.

9. He turns to the true source of comfort.

13, 14. These words were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Cp. Isa. liii. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 23.

17. *I am ready to halt, i.e.* I am in constant danger of falling, and of ruin. Cp. Job xii. 5. The P. B. V., following LXX. and Latin, has "I am set in the plague,"—"plague" meaning a stroke of affliction.

PSALM XXXIX.

Historical occasion. Another of the Psalms probably

¹ 1 Kings i. 7; cp. ver. 11 of the Psalm.

of David's old age, and composed on same occasion as the preceding. Jeduthun, to whom it is inscribed, was one of David's three choir-masters,¹ and is called the King's Seer.²

Christian application. As a homily on the shortness and sinfulness of life, with its expressed hope in God, a Christian may use it as his own. It is fitly appointed for use in the Burial Service.

2. *Even from good.* Meaning obscure; probably P. B. is right,—“even from good words.”

7. *My hope is in Thee.* In these words are to be found the only solution of the many mysteries and problems of life.

12. *A stranger—a sojourner.* So said Abraham (Gen. xxiii. 4), and so St. Peter (1 Ep. ii. 11), and the Ep. to the Hebrews (xi. 13). Cp. David's own words in 1 Chron. xxix. 15.

13. *That I may recover strength.* Literally, “that I may brighten up again,” “have a cheerful countenance.” Cp. Job x. 20, 21.³

PSALM XL.

Historical occasion. Another Psalm of David's old age; written probably in a time of peace following upon the sickness and distress in which Psalms xxxviii. and xxxix. were written.

Christian application. To our Blessed Lord and

¹ 1 Chron. xvi. 41, xxv. 1; 2 Chron. v. 12. Probably the same as Ethan, 1 Chron. xv. 17-19.

² 2 Chron. xxxv. 15.

³ This Psalm suggests that the Book of Job was well known to David, and had entered into his thoughts and feelings. See Job vii. 8, ix. 27, xiii. 28. So in Ps. xix. 4, the word rendered “words” is only found there, in Job (several times), and in three other places.

His atoning sufferings, as shown in Epistle to Hebrews (x. 5-10). Hence appointed as a proper Psalm for Good Friday.

6. *Sacrifice*. Of slain beasts ; *offerings*, of fine flour, etc. David enunciates the truth here that outward observances are of no avail without a surrender of our wills to God's will. So Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 22) had said before, and so the Prophets (Isa. i. 11-17 ; Hos. vi. 6 ; Mic. vi. 6-8) said afterwards.

Mine ears hast Thou opened: or pierced, (cp. Ps. xxii. 16). Literally, "Mine ears hast Thou dug," with the meaning probably, "Thou hast revealed this truth to me," viz., that obedience is better than sacrifice. Others understand the words to mean "Thou hast made me obedient," comparing Isa. l. 5, where, however, the Hebrew word for "opened" is not the same as here. So the LXX. (unless we suppose a mis-reading here) render "A body hast Thou prepared me," i.e. Thou hast endowed me with a body fitted to be obedient. Cp. Heb. x. 5, where the LXX. version is quoted, in illustration of our Lord's perfect obedience. Others again (Mede, Pearson), with the thought of the obedience rendered being a willing service, see a reference to boring the ear of a slave (Exod. xxi. 6 ; Deut. xv. 17). But this is not likely, the Hebrew verbs being quite different.

7. *In the volume of the book*. Most probably the Pentateuch generally is meant, with especial reference perhaps to the duties of a king in Deut. xvii. 18, 19.

8. *Within my heart*. Jer. xxxi. 33 ; Isa. li. 7 ; 2 Cor. iii. 3.

13, to the end. Found (with variations) again, as Ps. lxx. Cp. also Ps. xxxv.

EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XLI.

Historical occasion. Either when David heard of Ahithophel having joined Absalom,¹ in which case Ahithophel is certainly referred to in ver. 9; or when, in his old age, Adonijah and others rebelled against him. The former seems the more probable supposition. The Psalm ends with a doxology, which closes Book I. of the Psalms.

Christian application. By quoting ver. 9 of Judas,² our Lord has stamped this Psalm as Messianic.

8. *An evil disease, etc.* P. B. V. is, "Let the sentence of guiltiness proceed against him." Literally, "a thing of Belial." Meaning obscure, but probably it is a taunt of his enemies, describing the punishment of some sin David had committed.

9. Literally true of Absalom and Ahithophel,³ of Adonijah, Abiathar and Joab, as well as of Judas Iscariot.

13. This verse was perhaps no part of the original Psalm, but added afterwards as a completion of the First Book. Cp. 1 Chron. xvi. 36.

PSALM XLII. [Commences Second Book of the Psalter, xlii—lxxii.]

Historical occasion. Absalom's rebellion. The Psalm is one of the twelve ascribed to the sons (or descendants) of Korah, whose children did not all share

¹ 2 Sam. xv. 31.

² John xiii. 18; but He leaves out "in whom I trusted."

³ If Ahithophel was grandfather of Bathsheba, we have a possible cause of his treachery. See 2 Sam. xxiii. 34, 39, xi. 3; and Blunt's *Undesigned Coincidences*, p. 143.

their father's punishment.¹ These Korahites were distinguished for a long time as musicians and singers.² They were also keepers of the threshold of the Tabernacle,³ and appear to have been warlike men as well.⁴ The one of them who wrote this Psalm may well have been an intimate friend of David, and one of his companions in exile. David's spirit breathes forth in the Psalm, which is one of special beauty.

Christian application. The Psalm may be used as foreshadowing the sufferings of Christ, and as expressing the yearning of the Christian's heart after the presence of God.

1. *Panteth.* The word only occurs here and in Joel i. 20.

2. *Appear before God.* The usual phrase for going up to the Sanctuary at Jerusalem. Exod. xxiii. 17; Ps. lxxxiv. 7.

4. *With the voice of joy and praise, etc.* The feelings of the pilgrims attending the three great festivals at Jerusalem, stimulated by music and song,⁵ broke out in a shout of religious ardour and enthusiasm. Cp. our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, Matt. xxi. 9.

5, 6. *My soul is cast down.* The LXX. version of ver. 5 is applied by our Lord to Himself in Matt. xxvi. 38, and of ver. 6, in John xii. 27.

6. *The land of Jordan.* The country east of the river.

The Hermonites. The peaks (two, or three, travellers seem to differ as to the number) of Hermon, or the range itself.

The hill Mizar. Or, the little hill. Perhaps one of the lower eminences of Hermon, bearing this name.

¹ Numb. xxvi. 10, 11.

² 1 Chron. vi. 21, 31, 32; 2 Chron. xx. 13.

³ 1 Chron. ix. 19.

⁴ 1 Chron. xii. 6.

⁵ 2 Sam. vi. 5.

7. *Deep calleth unto deep.* "The confused noise of deep waters in motion." *Waterspouts* (P. B. V. water-pipes). Canals or channels for water (gutters, 2 Sam. v. 8). The Psalmist represents himself as overwhelmed by the whirling waters, as, swollen by some sudden and great storm, they toss and foam along the ravine or torrent-bed. It is the expression of intense spiritual depression. Cp. Jonah ii. 3.

PSALM XLIII.

A manifest continuation of the preceding. In many MSS. they are written as one Psalm.

3. *Thy Light and Thy Truth.* An allusion perhaps to the Urim and Thummim (Light and Perfection). See Exod. xxviii. 30.

LESSON V.

NINTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XLIV.

Historical occasion. Doubtful; but by comparing together Ps. lx. (which resembles this one), and especially the inscription, which records an event not elsewhere spoken of, 2 Sam. viii. 13, 14; 1 Kings xi. 15, 16; 1 Chron. xviii. 11, 12, it seems probable that it was written during David's war with the Syrians, when the Edomites took advantage of his absence to harass and distress Israel.

Christian application. "This Psalm excites the faithful to fight the good fight for Christ, and reminds them that no one is crowned except he strive lawfully (2 Tim. ii. 5); and in it we hear the voice of the holy martyrs."¹ Cp. Rom. viii. 36.

1. *Our fathers have told us.* See Exod. x. 2; Deut. vi. 20-25, etc.

2. *The people.* The nations of Canaan.

Cast them out. Rather, "didst spread them (the Israelites) abroad." The contrast in both sections of the verse is between the nations who were driven out, and the Israelites who were planted and spread abroad. Cp. Exod. xv. 17; Ps. lxxx. 8.

5. *Push down.* As cattle with their horns. Deut. xxxiii. 17.

¹ St. Jerome, quoted by Wordsworth.

14. *A byword.* Cp. the Amorite proverb, Numb. xxi. 27.

17. *Yet have we not forgotten Thee.* Remarkable words, well applicable to a time of high religious enthusiasm, as was the earlier part of David's reign.

19. *Dragons, i.e. jackals.* A dreary, waste place. See Jer. ix. 11, x. 22.

22. *For Thy sake, etc.* Quoted by St. Paul (Rom. viii. 36). But while the Psalmist is sorrowful, St. Paul rejoices, and sees victory as the end of all bravely-borne sorrows and trials, "through Him that loved us." Cp. Rev. vi. 9, 10.

PSALM XLV.

Historical occasion. Perhaps the marriage of Solomon, or some other king of Judah, with a princess; but many of the words and expressions are entirely unsuited to any earthly monarch. The Psalm contains, 1-9. Description of the superhuman beauty and excellence of the Bridegroom; 10-15. Description of the Bride; 16, 17. Assurance that the children shall perpetuate the glory and majesty of their Father.

Christian application. The Psalm is really and truly Messianic, directly prophetic of Jesus Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us this (i. 8, 9). It depicts the mystical marriage betwixt Christ and His Church. The children (ver. 16) of this marriage are the believers in Jesus Christ, the members of His Church, the spiritual seed (Isa. liii. 10), who show forth their Father's praises (1 Pet. ii. 9). Very suitably appointed for Christmas Day.

2. *Fairer than the children of men.* Cp. Isa. lii. 14, liii. 2. The King Messiah has more than one aspect; He is both a suffering and a conquering Messiah.

6. *Thy throne, O God.* Testimony to the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Heb. i. 8.

8. *Ivory palaces.* Cp. 1 Kings x. 18, xxii. 39.

9. *Gold of Ophir.* Well known in David's time. 1 Chron. xxix. 4.

10. *O daughter, i.e. the Queen*; spiritually prophetic of the Church, who is to "forget her own people," etc., by which we may understand the Old Adam of St. Paul.

3. *Within.* In the interior of the palace.

16. *Instead of thy fathers.* Addressed to the King. Spiritually the Old Dispensation.

Princes. Christ's disciples are a "royal priesthood." 1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. i. 6.

PSALM XLVI.

Historical occasion. Either Jehoshaphat's victory over Ammon, Moab and Edom, recorded in 2 Chron. xx., or the victory over Sennacherib in Isaiah's time. The similarity of expression (e.g. Isa. ii. 4, xxxiii. 2) seems to favour this latter view.

Christian application. It is the Church's song of triumph over her spiritual foes.

4. *There is a river.* Sennacherib threatened death by thirst to the people of Jerusalem (2 Chron. xxxii. 11). Hezekiah cut off the water supply from the enemy (2 Chron. xxxii. 3, 4), but took care to provide an excellent one for the city (2 Kings xx. 20; 2 Chron. xxxii. 30). But the true river is Jesus Christ, Who makes glad His servants with streams of Divine grace.¹

5. *Right early.* Literally, "at the dawning of the morning." Cp. 2 Kings xix. 35.

¹ John iv. 14, vii. 38; Rev. xxii. 1.

NINTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER

PSALM XLVII.

Historical occasion. Either the same as the preceding, or, as some think, the bringing up of the Ark to Mount Sion.¹ At any rate it is a Psalm of national thanksgiving.

Christian application. As a Psalm of victory it is most appropriately appointed for Ascension Day.

4. *The excellency of Jacob.* The Holy Land. Cp. Amos vi. 8.

5. *God is gone up.* Words literally fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Cp. Ps. lxviii. 18; Eph. iv. 8-10.

9. *The shields of the earth.* The princes and rulers. Cp. Hos. iv. 18 (text and margin).

PSALM XLVIII.

Historical occasion. Same probably as Ps. xlv. ; but verses 4-9 seem to point to the time of Jehoshaphat.²

Christian application. As the Israelite rejoiced in God's deliverance, and the grandeur and beauty of Zion, so the Christian may use these words of the spiritual Zion, and of the deliverance from sin wrought by Jesus Christ.

2. *The sides of the north.* This obscure expression seems to refer to the situation of the Temple, which lay north or north-east of Zion.

The great King. God.

7. *The ships of Tarshish.* This reference to Tarshish seems to fix the date of the Psalm to Jehoshaphat's time.²

¹ Verses 4 and 5 seem to favour this last.

² See also 1 Kings xxii. 48; 2 Chron. xx., esp. vv. 5-19 and 37.

PSALM XLIX.

Historical occasion. Doubtful; but, from its structure and thought, probably as late as Hezekiah's time.

Christian application. As justifying the ways of God to man it is an Old Testament anticipation of such parables as that of the rich man and Lazarus. In vv. 7, 8, it points to the redemption of man by Jesus Christ.

1. *The world.* The people of the present age or time.

2. *Low and high.* Literally, "sons of Adam and sons of Ish," i.e. people of all classes, "simple and gentle."

4. *My dark saying.* Words of deep and mysterious meaning. This verse was fulfilled in our Lord's teaching by parables. Matt. xiii. 35.

5. *Days of evil.* Of calamity, or perhaps old age, as in Eccles. xii. 1.

The iniquity of my heels. An obscure expression. Most probable meaning is, Iniquity, in the persons of the Psalmist's enemies (whether bodily or spiritual), lies in wait for him, if possible to trip him up. Cp. Gen. xlix. 17 and Ps. lvi. 6, where "steps" is literally "heels."

8. *It ceaseth.* The P. B. V. is a good paraphrase—"so that he must let that alone."

11. *After their own names.* Cp. Gen. iv. 17.

14. *Death shall feed on them.* Rather, Death shall be their shepherd, Hades being their sheepfold.

15. *God will redeem my soul.* Cp. Hos. xiii. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55.

18. *He blessed his soul.* So the rich fool, Luke xii.

19. Cp. Deut. xxix. 19.

TENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM L.

Historical occasion. The first of twelve Psalms ascribed to Asaph, one of David's three chief choir-masters.¹ It is no doubt of his date. Asaph was held in high repute as a Psalmist. 2 Chron. xxix. 30; Neh. xii. 46. The Psalm contains, 1-6, a call from God to hear the true explanation of the Law; teaches, 7-15, the spiritual meaning of all sacrifices; and, 16-23, warns the wicked that his sacrifices are profane and useless.

Christian application. In its central thought, re-echoed from Samuel,² of the greater excellence of the "right ordering of the conversation;" as compared with sacrifice, it is an anticipation of the Gospel. Cp. Mic. vi. 6-8.

2. *The perfection of beauty.* Mount Zion. Cp. Lam. ii. 15.

14. *Offer unto God thanksgiving.* This, with prayer, sums up all true religion. Heb. xiii. 15.

PSALM LI.

Historical occasion. This Psalm is the outpouring of David's heart, when he repented of his great sin, of which the particulars are given in 2 Sam. xi., xii. Ver. 18 contains reference to David's great desire to fortify Jerusalem. He is afraid lest his sin should stay the finishing of the work. See 2 Sam. v. 9; 1 Kings iii. 1; 1 Chron. xi. 8.

Christian application. By appointing it for use in the Communion Service, the Church shows that she

¹ 1 Chron. xv. 16, 17, xxv. 1, 2.

² 1 Sam. xv. 22.

regards this Psalm as expressing the convictions of every true penitent heart.¹

4. *Against Thee only.* Though he had grievously sinned against others, David felt that his chiefest offence was against God, Whose Law he had outraged. See 2 Sam. xii. 13.

That Thou mightest be justified. St. Paul quotes this passage (Rom. iii. 4), using it to prove that man's sin brings out into greater contrast God's holiness.

5. In this verse we have the acknowledgment of original sin. See Article IX.

7. *Hyssof.* Used, under the Law, in many cases of purification.² It is described 1 Kings iv. 33.

Whiter than snow. Cp. Isa. i. 18. The prophet knew this Psalm well.

13. *Then will I teach.* Cp. Luke xxii. 32.

18. In after times, taking up David's words, "Israel after the flesh, lamenting their Jerusalem which is now not theirs, and mourning over their ruined temple, in all their synagogues repeat constantly the prayer, O Lord, build Thou the walls of Jerusalem! O Lord, build! is the solemn chorus, marking by its repetition the earnestness of their desire. And should not this be the prayer of God's spiritual Israel?"—ARNOLD'S *Sermons*.

PSALM LII.

Historical occasion. Described in 1 Sam. xxi. 7;

¹ "This Psalm, written three thousand years ago, might have been written yesterday. It describes the vicissitudes of spiritual life in an Englishman, as truly as in a Jew."—ROBERTSON.

"This Psalm is a perfect model of penitential devotion."—BISHOP HORNE.

² See Exod. xii. 22; Lev. xiv. 4, 51; Numb. xix. 6.

xxii. 9, 18, 19. The character of the Psalm agrees with what we read of Doeg.

Christian application. As David suffered, so Christ suffered, and so His Church suffers at the hands of cruel enemies.

6. *Laugh.* As in next verse, because God's truth is vindicated. Cp. Job xxxi. 29; Prov. xxiv. 17.

8. *A green olive tree.* Type of gladness and joy. Nob¹ was situated, most probably, on the Mount of Olives;² hence the allusion to the olive.

TENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LIII.

A second edition of Ps. xiv., which see. The chief difference between the two is that in Ps. xiv. the name for God is Jehovah, while in this it is Elohim.

5. *Where no fear was.* Not in Ps. xiv. Cp. Job xv. 21; 2 Kings vii. 6, xix. 7.

For God hath scattered, etc. The dead were not buried, but their bones lay scattered about to whiten in the sun. This verse suggests the date of Jehoshaphat or Hezekiah, when it would be literally true. See 2 Chron. xx. 24; 2 Kings xix. 35.

PSALM LIV.

Historical occasion. The circumstances mentioned in the inscription are related in 1 Sam. xxiii. and xxvi.

Christian application. The Psalm has ever been

¹ See 1 Sam. xxii. 9. Nob has been almost certainly identified (1875) with the modern village of Shafat, situated on the northern slopes of the Olivet range of hills, some two and a half miles north of Jerusalem. It commands, as Nob did, a full view of the Holy City (Isa. x. 32).

² Compare Isa. x. 28-32; Neh. xi. 32.

regarded as prophetic of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and is therefore appointed as a proper Psalm for Good Friday.

3. *Strangers.* Either the Ziphites, or foreigners in Saul's army.

7. *His desire.* Not in the original, though some word must be supplied. The sense is "Mine eye hath looked upon mine enemies calmly," *i.e.* with assurance of victory. Cp. Ps. lix. 10.

PSALM LV.

Historical occasion. With little doubt Absalom's rebellion. Cp. 2 Sam. xv.

Christian application. As David in this Psalm takes refuge in God from his enemies, so the Christian may use it as the expression of his trust in Jesus Christ in the midst of spiritual foes.

2. *I mourn in my complaint.* Or, I wander about restlessly, am harassed with fears.

3. *They cast iniquity.* They are constantly trying to do me some mischief.

4, 5. Cp. Matt. xxvi. 38; Mark xiv. 33; John xii. 27, xiii. 21.

13. This description answers well to Ahithophel.

16. *Quick.* Alive. Cp. Numb. xvi. 30, to which there may be allusion.

19. *No changes.* Alternations of fortune. P. B. V. is wrong.

22. Cp. 1 Pet. v. 7.

LESSON VI.

ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LVI.

Historical occasion. The inscription says "when the Philistines took David in Gath," which is not mentioned in the history of the period. But the condition of things, as recorded in 1 Sam. xxi. xxii. xxvii., are quite suggestive of such a circumstance.

Christian application. The Christian may use this Psalm in great part as a prayer against his spiritual foes.

2. *O Thou most high.* Better not a vocative, but an adverb, "proudly," "haughtily," as descriptive of his enemies.

6. *My steps.* Literally, My heels. Cp. Ps. xlix. 5.

8. *My wanderings.* A touching description of David's life at this time.

My tears in Thy bottle. Cp. God's message to Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 5, and our Lord's words in Luke xii. 7.

Thy book. Cp. Exod. xxxii. 32; Mal. iii. 16; Phil. iv. 3, etc.

12. *Thy vows.* The vows made to God in time of trouble. Not "*my* vows" as in P. B. V.

PSALM LVII.

Historical occasion. The cave mentioned in the

inscription was either that of Adullam or that of En-gedi.¹

Christian application. David's deliverance was like a resurrection from the dead; and the Psalm is appointed for Easter Day, as prophetic of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. *The shadow of Thy wings.* Cp. Deut. xxxii. 11; Ruth ii. 12; Matt. xxiii. 37.

4. *Set on fire.* Breathing flame, as it were. Cp. Jas. iii. 6.

8. *I will awake right early.* Better "I will wake the dawn."² See Mark xvi. 9; Luke xxiv. 1.

PSALM LVIII.

Historical occasion. The Psalm reproves unjust judges, and from its stern character is thought to belong to the very early part of David's reign.

Christian application. It may be regarded as a call for punishment upon the enemies of the Gospel.

2. *Ye weigh the violence, etc.* Describes their unrighteous decisions.

4. *The deaf adder.* Snake charming by music was thus known in David's time: the adder being the most difficult to tame in this way was said to be deaf.

9. A very difficult verse. The meaning seems to be that these wicked ones shall be swept away as quickly as the dry sticks or thorns which a blast of wind sweeps away before the fire of them has had time to heat the caldron.

¹ 1 Sam. xxii. 1, xxiv. 1-3; 2 Sam. xxiii. 13.

² Cp. MILTON, *L'Allegro*:

"While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of darkness thin."

10. *Wash his feet.* The destruction is wrought by God, not by man. Cp. Ps. lxxiii. 23.

ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LIX.

Historical occasion. The character of the Psalm bears out the inscription, which alludes to the circumstances recorded in 1 Sam. xix. 11. It is thus one of David's earliest Psalms.

Christian application. The Psalm is prophetic of the rejection of Christ's enemies, who believe not in Him.

3. *Not for my transgression, etc.* Words only fully applicable to Jesus Christ.

5. *O Lord God of Hosts.* This title of God, very frequent in the Psalms and the Prophets (except Ezekiel and Daniel), is found for the first time in 1 Sam. i. 3.

6. *They return at evening.* To make fresh search.

9. *Because of his strength.* Obscure; the reading is most likely wrong. Better, with some MSS., regard the Psalmist as addressing God, "O my strength." Cp. ver. 17.

10. *My desire.* See note on Ps. liv. 7.

11. *Slay them not, etc.* If his enemies were to die at once, they would be less of an example than if they should become, as Cain, fugitives and vagabonds. Words fulfilled in the highest sense by the scattering in all lands of the Jews, the enemies of Jesus Christ.

15. *Grudge.* Rather as in margin—"They will stay all night," *i.e.* on the watch.

PSALM LX.

Historical occasion. The circumstances alluded to

in the inscription are recorded in 2 Sam. viii.;¹ 1 Chron. xviii. 12. The Psalm alludes to reverses which are not mentioned in the historical books ; but the terrible vengeance which Joab took upon Edom² suggests previous victory and oppression on the part of Edom. Aram-naharaim, *i.e.* Mesopotamia. The "valley of salt," the barren country south of the Dead Sea.

Christian application. The Psalm is prophetic of Christ's victory over the world, Jewish and Gentile.

4. *A banner.* Cp. Exod. xvii. 15, "Jehovah-Nissi;" and the words of reception in the Baptismal Service, "manfully to fight under Christ's banner."

6. *Divide Shechem.* Mete out, measure. Shechem probably stands for the land west of Jordan, and Succoth for that east of the river.

7. This verse represents Israel as one united nation, without tribal jealousies. This condition of things existed only in the reigns of David and Solomon.

8. *Washpot.* Used as a term of contempt. The vessel intended was used for washing the feet. The subjugation of Moab was complete.³

My shoe. In token that Edom is reduced to slavery. Cp. 2 Sam. viii. 14.

Philistia, triumph thou, etc. Perhaps a call to the Philistines to join David's army,⁴ or perhaps it should be, as in the parallel passage, Ps. cviii. 9, "over Philistia will I triumph."

9. *The strong city.* The fortified city, Petra or Rabbath-Ammon.

¹ In 2 Sam. viii. 13 we should read "Edomites" instead of "Syrians."

² 1 Kings xi. 15, 16.

³ 2 Sam. viii. 2.

⁴ The Philistines certainly seem to have acted as allies of David. Cp. 2 Sam. xv. 18.

PSALM LXI.

Historical occasion. Most probably Absalom's rebellion.

Christian application is to Christ; Who, having suffered, "abideth before God for ever."

2. *The rock, etc.* David may have had Zion in his mind; but the ancient Fathers apply the words to Jesus Christ.

4. *Tabernacle.* The Temple was not yet built. The earthly tabernacle is the type to David, as to us, of the heavenly.

In the covert of Thy wings. The thought is of the wings of the Cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat.

6, 7. Only really true of the King Messiah.

8. Shows David's belief in the future life.

TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXII.

Historical occasion. Probably about the time of Absalom's rebellion, towards the close of David's reign. Cp. Ps. xxxix.

Christian application. The Psalm expresses the Christian's hope and confidence in God.

3. *Against a man.* Cp. Ahithophel's threat, 2 Sam. xvii. 2.

9. *Men of low degree, etc.* See Ps. xlix. 2, note.

To be laid in the balance, etc. The meaning seems to be, they are as light as air, so that when put in the scale of truth and justice they go up.

PSALM LXIII.

Historical occasion. Very clearly the time of Absa-

hom's rebellion, when David and his people were "hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness."¹ The Psalm describes, 1-5, the comfort of communion with God; and says, 6-11, that such communion strengthens a man to face and overcome his enemies.

Christian application. One of the most beautiful of the Psalms; it meets the need of all, especially of the man who on a sickbed is debarred from the worship of the Sanctuary.²

Inscription, *The wilderness of Judah.* The district lying along the western shore of the Dead Sea, and between Jerusalem, Jericho and the Jordan.

1. *Longeth.* The force of this word, which occurs nowhere else in the Bible, seems to be, that the longing of the soul produces blindness and faintness.

2. *Thy power and Thy glory.* Words used of the Ark, 1 Sam. iv. 21; Ps. lxxviii. 61. The two clauses of this verse ought to be transposed, as in the original Hebrew.

11. *That sweareth by Him.* That giveth his allegiance to God.

PSALM LXIV.

Historical occasion. Evidently some time when his enemies were seeking David's life, and speaking evil of him with their tongues, inciting perhaps Saul against him.

Christian application. May be used as a Christian's prayer against his spiritual foes.

5. *Who shall see them? i.e.* the speakers, not the snares they lay.

¹ 2 Sam. xvii. 29.

² In the early Church this Psalm was sung every day. "The spirit and soul of the whole book of Psalms is contracted into this Psalm."—ST. CHRYSOSTOM, quoted by Perowne.

7. *With an arrow.* Cp. Rev. vi. 2.

8. With this verse, compare the account of the plotting in 2 Sam. xvii. See also Prov. xviii. 7.

TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXV.

Historical occasion. Probably, but not certainly, David's return to Jerusalem after Absalom's rebellion. His return may have been signalized by a very abundant harvest, or the description in the latter part of the verse may express David's joy in seeing the cultivated land after his sojourn in the wilderness.¹ The Psalm shows us, 1-4, the true way of approaching God; (a) Prayer, (b) Confession, (c) Thanksgiving; and then, 5-8, Celebrates God's wonderful works, especially in, 9-13, the fruits of harvest.

Christian application. It is the harvest hymn of the Christian Church, as she blesses God for the harvest of the earth, and for the spiritual harvest. Cp. John iv. 35.

4. *Temple.* The same Hebrew word is used for the tabernacle in 1 Sam. i. 9, iii. 3; 2 Sam. xxii. 7, and other passages.

5. *Terrible things.* Great, wonderful things. Deut. x. 21.

8. *Thy tokens.* The signs of God's near presence.

9. *Waterest it.* P. B. V. "blessest it."

The river of God, which is full of water. Cp. John iv. 10-14.

10. Man having first done his part in ploughing, etc., God blessed his work by sending the fertilizing rain.

¹ Some would refer the Psalm to Hezekiah's time (cp. Isa. xxxvii. 30), but without sufficient reason. With more probability it might perhaps be the thanksgiving for the first abundant harvest after the three years' famine of 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

PSALM LXVI.

Historical occasion. Perhaps some occasion of national deliverance in the reigns of Asa, Jehoshaphat or Hezekiah. Composed probably by some member of the great musical Levite families, and intended for the Temple worship.

Christian application. It is prophetic of the spiritual triumphs of Jesus Christ over men's souls.

3. *Submit themselves.* "Yield feigned obedience," as in margin. Cp. Ps. xviii. 44; lxxx. 15.

6. *The sea.* Referring to the passages of the Red Sea and the Jordan.

9. *To be moved.* This verse and ver. 10 point to a time of trial in Israel's history, but yet of full national vigour.

12. *A wealthy place.* Literally, "abundance."

18. *If I regard.* Better the past tense, "If I had regarded . . . the Lord would not have heard me."

PSALM LXVII.

Historical occasion. Uncertain, but probably of Hezekiah's time, when the prophecies of Isaiah must have awakened spiritual hopes for their nation in the hearts of many.

Christian application. By its use at Evening Prayer as an alternative canticle instead of "Nunc dimittis," the Church shows that she regards it as a prophecy of Messiah and of the blessings of the Gospel.

1. Allusion here, and in vv. 6 and 7, to the high priest's blessing in Numb. vi. 24-27; but there the name of God is Jehovah, here it is Elohim.

2. To be noted as associating the blessing of Israel with the conversion of the world.

THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXVIII.

Historical occasion. Jerusalem, and God's presence there, is the central thought of the Psalm; Israel and Judah are represented (ver. 27) as one united nation; the mention of Egypt and Ethiopia; the silence regarding Assyria or Babylon—all these, together with the impassioned character of its composition, point to David's time as that of the composition of this grand Psalm, and help to corroborate the inscription. It was probably composed on some re-entry of the Ark into Jerusalem, after some victory, for it more than once accompanied the army to battle.¹

Christian application. The reference of St. Paul to ver. 18² at once fixes the Messianic character of the Psalm, as prophetic of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension and the Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. Hence it is fittingly appointed as a proper Psalm for Whitsun Day.

1. An obvious reference to Numb. x. 35, only Elohim is put for Jehovah.

4. *On the heavens.* The P. B. V. inserts "as it were upon an horse."

6. *God setteth the solitary in families.* P. B. V. is wrong.

7, 8. An echo of Moses' words, and of Deborah's song.³

9. *A plentiful rain.* In allusion, probably, to the manna, etc.

11. *Great was the company.* The reference here is

¹ 2 Sam. xi. 11.

² Eph. iv. 8.

³ Deut. xxxiii. 2; Judges v. 4, 5.

to the number of women who celebrated the victories. Hence "preachers" of P. B. V. gives a wrong idea. See Exod. xv.; Judges v.; 1 Sam. xviii. 6.

12. *She that tarried at home.* Cp. Judges v. 24, 30.

13. *Among the pots.* Rather "among the sheep-folds." Cp. again, Deborah's song, Judges v. 16.

The wings of a dove, etc. Meaning seems to be that though the men have behaved as cowards, and remained with their flocks instead of facing the enemy, they yet should reap the advantage of the complete victory gained, which is represented by the bird secure in her gorgeous plumage.

14. *As white as snow in Salmon.* Salmon was a low mountain near Shechem,¹ covered with trees of dark foliage. The meaning seems to be that the scattered arms and baggage of the kings resembled the snow as it lay in patches on the dark trees.

15. *The hill of God, etc.* Rather, "A hill of God is the hill of Bashan, a hill of peaks is the hill of Bashan." But

16. Though these hills be high, yet the little hill of Sion is better, for there God especially dwells.

18. *Received.* St. Paul, as if interpreting by the light of the Gospel, paraphrases this by the word "gave."²

19. *Who daily loadeth us, etc.* Better, "Who day by day beareth our burden."

21. *The hairy scalp.* A thick head of hair, emblem of the proud sinner. Cp. Samson and Absalom.

22. *I will bring again from Bashan, etc.* Not Israel, as in A. V., but Israel's enemies, who shall be brought from their places of refuge on every side, and given up

¹ Judges ix. 48.

² Eph. iv. 7, 8.

to the vengeance of God's people. Cp. the remarkable parallel passage in Amos ix. 1-4.

24, 25. Description of a solemn religious procession.

26. The chorus sung by the damsels.

27. Four tribes mentioned to represent the whole nation; *little*¹ *Benjamin*, as first royal tribe; *Judah*, as the most powerful, and the tribe of the Psalmist, *Zebulun and Naphtali*, as representing the courage of the nation under its most disinterested and best aspect. See Judges v. 18.

29. *Temple*. See Ps. lxxv. 4.

30. *Company of the spearmen*. Literally, "the beasts of the reeds," probably a symbolical expression for Egypt, the beast being the crocodile, and the reed the bulrush which grows in the Nile.

Bulls. Probably the leaders of the people.

Calves of the people. The people themselves. Cp. Ps. xxii. 12; Amos iv. 1. The Psalmist calls upon God to rebuke all the enemies of the truth, until they submit and pay tribute.

31. *Ethiopia, etc.* Cp. Acts viii. 26-29.

32-35. As the ancient Israelite exulted in the thought of God's power and majesty, so the Christian may use these verses as he meditates upon the victories of His Divine Lord.

THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXIX.

Historical occasion. Ascribed by St. Paul to David,² and there is no good reason for doubting that it is his composition, written at a time of deep depression,

¹ 1 Sam. ix. 21.

² Rom. xi. 9.

perhaps at the close of his life, when Adonijah was raising up a rebellion.

Christian application. It is clearly Messianic, being quoted both by our Lord of Himself,¹ and by His Apostles of Him.² Hence its appointment for Good Friday.

2. Cp. Ps. xl. 2, to which Psalm many points of resemblance may be traced in this.

7. *I have borne reproach.* Cp. Jer. xv. 15. The resemblance of the two passages has led some to regard the Psalm as Jeremiah's, but without sufficient reason.

8. Cp. John i. 11, vii. 5; Isa. liii. 3.

9. *The reproaches, etc.* Applied to our Lord by St. Paul, Rom. xv. 3.

12. *Sit in the gate.* The rulers and chief men.

The song. Cp. Job xxx. 9.

13. *In an acceptable time.* Cp. Isa. xlix. 8; 2 Cor. vi. 2.

14. *Out of the mire.* Cp. Jer. xxxviii. 6.

15. *Shut her mouth, etc.* Referring to the large stone with which the mouth of a pit or well was closed.

21 *Gall.* The Hebrew word means some "poisonful herb,"³ perhaps the poppy.⁴ St. John (xix. 28, 29) regards this verse as fulfilled in our Blessed Lord. See also Mark xv. 23; Matt. xxvii. 34.

22-28. St. Paul (Rom. xi. 11) suggests to us the true explanation of these terrible words of imprecation. They are words of warning, and therefore of mercy. If we regard them as the real wish of the Psalmist's heart for his enemies, we must bear in mind that our Lord Himself points out the difference between the spirit of the older dispensation and the spirit of the

¹ Ver. 4; cp. with John xv. 25.

² See, for instance, ver. 9 and John ii. 17.

³ Deut. xxix. 18, marg. ⁴ So Art. "Gall," in *Dict. of Bible*.

newer.¹ At the same time, there can be no doubt, as both St. Peter² and St. Paul³ show, that the words were fulfilled in the persons of our Lord's enemies.

27. *Add iniquity unto iniquity, i.e.* "Accumulate the records of their sins" in Thy Book.

28. *The book of the living.* See Exod. xxxii. 32. The expression is used, or referred to, by Daniel (xii. 1), St. Paul (Phil. iv. 3), and by our Lord (Rev. iii. 5, xxii. 19).

31. *Horns and hoofs.* Animals fitted for sacrifice, being of the right age, as shown by the horns, and cloven-footed, as shown by the hoofs.

35. *Build the cities.* See Ps. li. 18. This wish or prayer of David seems to have had its fulfilment in the acts of Solomon and Rehoboam.⁴ There is no need to regard this verse as a liturgical addition of later times, or to postpone the date of the whole Psalm.

PSALM LXX.

A repetition, with slight variations, of Ps. xl. 13-17. The name "Elohim" is in part substituted for that of "Jehovah" in the earlier Psalm. Perhaps this Psalm was detached from Ps. xl. for some liturgical purpose, and so used separately. See further, Ps. xl.

¹ Luke. ix. 54-56.

² Acts i. 20.

³ Rom. xi. 9-11.

⁴ 1 Kings ix. 15; 2 Chron. viii. 2, 3, xi. 6-10.

LESSON VII.

FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXI.

Historical occasion. Uncertain. The Psalm is, in the main, a compilation from earlier psalms, and was evidently written by one in old age.¹ There is nothing against its being David's, although some think it was composed by Jeremiah.²

Christian application. By using this Psalm in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, the Church shows distinctly how she regards it as embodying the thoughts and prayers of the sick Christian as much as it did those of the afflicted Israelite.

7. *A wonder.* Either (1) because of God's protecting care, or (2) in the sense of a sign, as Ezek. xii. 6, etc.

22. *Holy One of Israel.* A title of God, very frequent in Isaiah, but occurring only three times in the Psalms,—here and in Ps. lxxviii. 41, lxxxix. 18.

23. *Which Thou hast redeemed.* Cp. David's words, 1 Kings i. 29.

PSALM LXXII.

Historical occasion. Generally admitted to be of

¹ See vv. 5, 9, 18.

² A conclusion suggested partly by the LXX. inscription, which calls it "A Psalm of David, of the sons of Jonadab, and of those who were first led captive." But this means only that the LXX. believed it to be a real Davidic Psalm, and a specially favourite one of the Rechabites and first captives.

Solomon's composition, and, from its tenor, in the early part of his reign, although ver. 10 may point to a somewhat later period of his life.

Christian application. The tone of the Psalm is Messianic throughout, many of the expressions being not applicable to Solomon, but only to One greater than he.

1. *The King.* Messiah, as the old Jewish commentator allows.

3. *The mountains, etc.* Peace shall be proclaimed on the high places, as in Isa. xl. 9, lii. 7.

6. P. B. V. "like rain into a fleece of wool" (used for collecting the rain-drops in a dry season; cp. Judges vi. 37). The Hebrew word means something *shorn* or *mown*; the Bible V. is best.

8. *The river.* The Euphrates. Cp. Exod. xxiii. 31.

10. *Tarshish.* Probably the great Phenician port, Tartessus, in Spain. The expression "Tarshish and the isles" represents the countries to the west of Palestine, and may vaguely include England, with which the Phenicians even then probably traded.

11. *Sheba and Seba.* The nations of Asia and Africa. Sheba was a South Arabian country;¹ Seba an African country bordering on Ethiopia.²

15. *Prayer—made for Him, i.e.* for the King, out of gratitude for blessings conferred. The P. B. V. here seems to be wrong.

16. *Handful.* Rather, abundance.

17. This verse recalls God's promise to Abraham.

18, 19. These verses form the Doxology which closes the Second Book of the Psalter. They are not an original part of the Psalm.

¹ Gen. x. 28.

² Gen. x. 7; Isa. xliii. 3.

20. *The Son of Jesse.* Cp. 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. This verse was probably added to mark the close of a first or earlier collection of Psalms, in which the greater number (sixty at least) are Davidic.

FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXIII. [Commences Third Book of the Psalter ; lxxiii—lxxxix.]

Historical occasion. This and the ten following Psalms are ascribed to Asaph.¹ It is a meditation upon the state of society in the Psalmist's time, and may well have been written in the evil times (spiritually) towards the close of Solomon's reign. The Psalm (1-15) describes the wicked and their condition, with the effect upon the Psalmist's mind; and (16-28) affords the true answer to all the difficulties experienced by him.

Christian application. As with the Psalmist, so with the Christian, prayer and meditation upon God's Word are the only means of answering the many puzzles of human life.

4. *No bands.* No pain, doubts, misgivings.

7. *More than heart could wish.* Rather, the thoughts of their hearts break (or, overflow) all bounds.

10. *Therefore his people return.* The people are led astray by the pride and pomp of these godless persons, and obtain, as they imagine, much advantage from them.

12. With this verse the Psalmist begins to describe his own reflections.

¹ See Ps. l.

23, 24. Though he cannot understand all God's ways, yet he is content to place himself in God's hands.

26. An anticipation of the future life.

PSALM LXXIV.

Historical occasion. Most likely the invasion of Judah and Jerusalem in the time of Rehoboam,¹ by Shishak, King of Egypt. Jeremiah seems to have this Psalm in his thoughts in Lam. ii. 4, 7, 9.

Christian application. The Psalm may be used as a prayer against the inroads of unbelief upon the spiritual Zion.

6. *The carved work,*² etc. Words most suitable in the mouth of one living when the Temple would be in its first glory, and there would still be a remembrance of the day of its consecration.

7. *They have defiled,* etc. The P. B. V. here is more according to the Hebrew idiom.

8. *Synagogues.* Places of assembly, such probably as Ramah, Shiloh, Gibeon, Bethel.

9. *No more any prophet.* The prophetic gift was withheld for a time, in consequence of the sin of the people.

13, 14. *Dragons.* Sea monsters; *leviathan*, the crocodile. This allusion to the destruction of Pharaoh and his host is most apt at the time of an Egyptian invasion of Judah.

The people inhabiting, etc. Not the Israelites,³ but, as is most natural, the wild beasts dwelling in the wilderness, to whom the bodies of the dead Egyptians became a prey. Cp. Prov. xxx. 25.

19. *The multitude—the congregation.* The same word in the Hebrew.

¹ 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26; 2 Chron. xii. 2-9. The use of an Egyptian word for "hammers" in ver. 6 adds probability to the assigned date.

² 1 Kings vi. 18, 32, 35.

FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXV.

Historical occasion. Doubtful. Not improbably it was the song of thanksgiving after the deliverance prayed for in the last Psalm. It bears a strong resemblance to the Songs of Hannah and Mary. The Psalm is dramatic, introducing God as the Speaker in vv. 2-5, or perhaps only vv. 2, 3.

Christian application. It is prophetic of Christ's victories over His enemies.

2. *When I shall receive, etc.* Rather, "When I shall take a set time," *i.e.* when the day of judgment is come, the day of the Lord.¹

3. *The pillars.* (1) The foundations upon which the physical order of things is set, or meted out (cp. Isa. xl. 12); (2) The rulers to whom is committed the moral government of the world (cp. 1 Sam. ii. 8).

4. *Your horn.* In allusion to the ornament for the forehead. Some see here a reference to the speech of Rabshakeh.²

6. *Promotion.* Rather, lifting up, deliverance. The same word occurs in vv. 4, 5, 7 (setteth up), 10 (exalted).

8. *Wine is red.* Rather, "is foaming."

Full of mixture. Strongly spiced, to increase its strength and intoxicating power.

PSALM LXXVI.

Historical occasion. The miraculous discomfiture and overthrow of Sennacherib's army.³

¹ Cp. Ps. cii. 13; Hab. ii. 3 (appointed time). ² 2 Kings xviii. 19-35.

³ 2 Kings xix. 35; 2 Chron. xxxii. 21; Isa. xxxvii. 36.

Christian application. Some of the ancient Fathers see in this Psalm a prophetic vision, as it were, of the final judgment.

2. *Salem.* The ancient name of Jerusalem. Gen. xiv. 18;¹ Heb. vii. 1, 2.

3. *The arrows, etc.* Cp. 2 Kings xix. 32.

4. *Than the mountains of prey* Rather, "*from the mountains of prey,*" there being no comparison as in A. V. "*Glorious Thou, excellent from,*" etc.

5. *Slept their sleep, i.e.* of death. 2 Kings xix. 35.

10. *Shalt Thou restrain.* Rather "*Shalt Thou gird Thyself with,*" *i.e.* "*make thine enemies a very sword in Thine hand.*" Cp. Isa. x. 5-15.

PSALM LXXVII.

Historical occasion. Quite uncertain; but some personal or national distress almost certainly before the time of Habakkuk, that is, of Manasseh, or Josiah. Cp. with the Psalm Hab. iii., which has many similarities.

Christian application. The contemplation of God's mercies in the past give peace and hope for the future.

4. *Mine eyes waking, i.e.* I cannot sleep, cannot close my eyelids.

13. *In the sanctuary.* Rather "*is holy,*" as P. B. V. Cp. Isa. xxxv. 8.

16. *The waters,*—of the Red Sea.

18. *In the heaven.* Or, "*round about,*" as P. B. V.; the thunders of God echoing amid the heights of Sinai.

¹ "*Shalem,*" in Gen. xxxiii. 18, is not the same place. It would be better there to translate it "*in peace.*"

FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXVIII.

Historical occasion. Composed for the public worship in the Temple, most probably either (1) soon after the building of the Temple, or (2) in the reign of Abijah, of whose apology for Judah¹ some expressions in this Psalm remind us. The Psalm may be divided thus: 1-8. Introduction; the people called to attend to the instruction to be derived from considering the past history of their nation; 9-31. Sketch of the events in the wilderness; 32-42. Reflections of the Psalmist; 43-53. Sketch of the miracles of the Exodus. 54-64. Sketch of the entry into the Promised Land, and of the falling away of the people into idolatry; 65-72. Rejection of Ephraim and Shiloh, the choice of Judah, David and Zion.

Christian application. The use made by St. Matthew² of ver. 2 shows us that the history of God's chosen people is a parable of instruction to us.

9. *The children of Ephraim . . . turned back.* Ephraim, as at first the most powerful tribe, is probably put for the whole nation. The particular event referred to here is quite uncertain. Cp. Judg. i. 29.

12. *Zoan.* Tanis, in the eastern part of lower Egypt. "The field" is the country round the town, and is believed to have been in great part that which is now covered by Lake Menzaleh. Cp. Numb. xiii. 22.

25. *Angels' food.* See margin. The meaning probably is food from the place where Angels dwell, or supplied by the ministry of Angels. Or it may mean food of the nobles or princes, *i.e.* the best food.

¹ 2 Chron. xiii. 4-12.

² Matt. xiii. 34, 35.

Cp. Job xxiv. 22, xxxiv. 20, for use of word in this sense. Our Lord teaches us the spiritual meaning of the manna food in John vi. 49-51.

35. *Their Rock*. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 4.

47. *Vines*. Extensively cultivated in ancient Egypt, though not mentioned in Exod. ix. 22-32; cp. Gen. xl. 9.

Frost. Rather, perhaps, "hailstones" as in margin.

54. *This mountain*. See ver. 68.

60. *The Tabernacle of Shiloh*. See Josh. xviii. 1; cp. Jer. vii. 12.

61. *His strength—His Glory*. The Ark. Cp. Ps. lxiii. 2; 1 Sam. iv. 21.

72. The abrupt conclusion of the Psalm is believed by some to mark its composition as belonging to David's lifetime.

SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXIX.

Historical occasion. The same as Ps. lxxiv.

Christian application. As a confession of sin, and of the righteousness of God's judgments, the Psalm is at all times applicable, although such expressions as that in ver. 6 can scarcely be applied in any Christian sense.

2. Quoted 1 Macc. vii. 16 as then fulfilled. This would not of course hinder a strictly historical application to an earlier period.

4. *Neighbours*. Edom, Moab, etc. So also Ps. lxxx.

6. The expression points to an early date for the Psalm.

6, 7. Jeremiah (x. 25) quotes¹ these verses. See also Jer. xiv. 16, xvi. 4, for other resemblances.

¹ It is regarded as an open question by some whether Jeremiah quotes the Psalm, or the Psalm quotes Jeremiah.

8. *Prevent.* In the old English sense of "going before," "anticipating."

11. *The prisoner.* Reference most likely to the captives led into Egypt by Shishak, and there sacrificed to his gods. Such scenes are portrayed on the monuments at Karnak, erected in Shishak's reign.

PSALM LXXX.

Historical occasion. Almost certainly the same national disaster which occasioned Psalms lxxiv. and lxxix. The tone of the Psalm points to some earlier disaster than the captivity either of Israel or of Judah. See ver. 1.

Christian application. The Psalm may be taken as prophetic of the spread of Christianity, with prayer for deliverance from the bondage of sin. The Jewish interpreters regard ver. 17 as prophetic of Messiah. Cp. Luke i. 66.

1. *Between the Cherubim.* Shows the temple was still standing.

2. See Numb. ii. 16-24. These three tribes followed the Ark, bringing up the rear.

5. *The bread of tears.* Allusion perhaps to the manna.

8. *A vine.* Cp. Jacob's blessing of Joseph, Gen. xlix. 22.

17. *The man of Thy right hand.* The Jewish nation, or perhaps some special deliverer appointed by God.

PSALM LXXXI.

Historical occasion. The Psalm is evidently intended for the worship of the Sanctuary, probably (ver. 2) at the Feast of Tabernacles. David's care for the music of the Sanctuary, and the inscription, both point to his reign as the date of the Psalm. In its structure it is

dramatic; 1-5. A call from the Psalmist to praise God; 6-16. God speaks, recounting His mercies to the people.

Christian application. As the Feast of Tabernacles commemorated God's mercies to the Israelites in the wilderness, so on the great feasts of the Christian year the Christian may use this Psalm as reminding him of God's mercies through Christ.

2. *Harp.* Hebrew, kinnor; probably, the most ancient Hebrew stringed instrument. Gen. iv. 21.

3. *Blow up the trumpet.* The trumpet was commonly made of ram's horn. Cp. Ps. cl. 3.

In the new moon. See Numb. xxix. 1; Lev. xxiii. 24.

5. *I heard a language, etc.* The voice of God speaking from Mount Sinai.

10. *Open thy mouth wide.* To receive spiritual as well as temporal food.

15. *Submitted.* See margin. Cp. Ps. xviii. 44, lxvi. 3; *their time, i.e.* Israel's.

SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXXII.

Historical occasion. Some time of reformation, such as that under Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xix. 5-11), or that indicated by Isaiah (iii. 13-15).

Christian application. In all stations of life God requires faith in Him, and obedience to His law, in the discharge of the duties of daily life.

1. *Of the mighty.* Rather "of God," *i.e.* amongst the Israelites.

Among the gods. The rulers of Israel. See ver. 6 and John x. 34.

6. *Ye are gods.* By reason of God's covenant with them.

7. *The Princes.* Such as those in Ps. lxxxiii. 11.

PSALM LXXXIII.

Historical occasion. The confederacy of Moab, Ammon (see ver. 8), and others against Judah and Jehoshaphat mentioned in 2 Chron. xx. The author probably was Jahaziel, "a Levite of the sons of Asaph."¹

Christian application. The Psalm may be regarded as prophetic of the spiritual enemies of Christ's Church and their complete overthrow.

6. *Hagarenes.* A nomadic people dwelling in the east of Gilead; and conquered by the Reubenites in the time of Saul.²

7. *Gebal.* The mountainous district south of Edom, bordering on the Elanitic gulf of the Red Sea. *Amalek* was destroyed by Simeon before the captivity.³

8. *Assur.* The first note of Assyria as a rising power.

11. *Oreb, etc.* For the history see Judges iv. v. vii. viii. Cp. Isa. x. 26.

16. *That they may seek, etc., i.e.* that they may acknowledge their subjection to Thee.

PSALM LXXXIV.

Historical occasion. Most probably the writer's flight with David from the insurrection of Absalom. Cp. Psalms xlii. xliii. The Psalm has three divisions (1-4, 5-8, 9-12), each describing the longing of the Psalmist's heart after the Sanctuary, and the blessedness of those who dwell there, and trust in God.

Christian application. The blessedness which the Psalmist found in God's Sanctuary, the Christian finds there too, and in the thought of the eternal temple in Heaven.

¹ 2 Chron. xx. 14. This Psalm and the chapter should be read together.

² 1 Chron. v. 10, 18-22.

³ 1 Chron. iv. 43

6. *Valley of Baca.* Valley of weeping. The meaning is, that under the most trying circumstances, God's servant will find springs of spiritual comfort. *The rain also.* Divine grace shed abroad.

7. *From strength to strength.* They are encouraged, and gather strength as the end of the toilsome journey comes into view. Isa. xl. 31. Cp. John i. 16.

9. *Thine anointed.* The king.

11. *God is a Sun.* The only passage where God is so called. Messiah is so called, Mal. iv. 2.

PSALM LXXXV.

Historical occasion. Deliverance from some national disaster, perhaps David's return from exile, or Rehoboam's release from the power of Egypt.¹ But the depressed tone of vv. 4-7 suit better perhaps Nehemiah's time (Neh. i. 1-4).

Christian application. In its latter portion, the Psalm is essentially Messianic, prophetic of the blessings attendant upon Christ's Incarnation. Hence it is fitly appointed of Christmas Day.

1. *Brought back the captivity.* A general phrase for deliverance from trouble (cp. Job xlii. 10), and therefore not to be taken as necessarily marking the post-Captivity date of the Psalm.

10, 11. Fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

¹ 2 Chron. xii. 12.

LESSON VIII.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXXVI.

Historical occasion. Quite uncertain. There is nothing specially to mark it as David's, but it may be his, although scarcely so vigorous in expression as some of the Psalms which are undoubtedly his.

Christian application. Prophetic of Christ in His humiliation praying to His heavenly Father.

9. Cp. Ps. xxii. 31.

11. *Thy way—Thy truth—Unite my heart.* Cp John xiv. 6.

13. *From the lowest hell.* From the place of the departed.

16. *Son of thine handmaid.* The expression points perhaps to the remembrance of a pious mother.

PSALM LXXXVII.

Historical occasion. Uncertain, but from resemblances to passages in Isaiah, not improbably the deliverance of Hezekiah and the people from Sennacherib.¹ The Psalm celebrates (1-3) the glory of Zion; and, 4-6, the union of all nations in Zion, who claim from her their spiritual birth.

Christian application. The Psalm is most distinctly Messianic, declaring the glory and beauty of the Christian Church.

1. *His, i.e.* "God's," not "Her" as P. B. V.

2. *More than all.* A reminiscence of Shiloh and Bethel.

¹ See, for instance, Isa. ii. 2-4, xi. 10.

4. *Rahab*. Poetical name for Egypt. *Babylon*. Mentioned perhaps by reason of the embassy sent to Hezekiah. *To them*. Rather "among them," as forming part of God's people. *This man was born there*. Cp. ver. 5. A prophecy of the admission of the Gentiles into the privileges of God's chosen people. Fulfilled in the Christian Church. Cp. Rom. xi. 17.

7. *All my springs*. The converted Gentiles confess that Jerusalem is the true source of all their spiritual joy.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

Historical occasion. Doubtful; it has been variously ascribed to Uzziah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah. It may well have been written in the troubled times after the death of Solomon. It is the most intensely sad of all the Psalms, ending with no ray of hope. This fact almost certainly prevents it from being David's.

Christian application. By appointing it for use on Good Friday, the Church shows that she regards it as prophetic of Christ's sufferings.

5. *Free among the dead, i.e.* He is discharged from all the duties of life. Or, perhaps, he is cast away among the dead.

8. *I am shut up*. This might be the language of a leper, and thus point to Uzziah as the author. Cp. Job iii. 23, xix. 8. There are many parallels between this Psalm and the Book of Job, showing either great familiarity with the Book by the writer of the Psalm, or suggesting a common authorship. Cp. Lam. iii. 7.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXXIX.

Historical occasion. The contents of the Psalm,

no less than the inscription, would lead us to place this Psalm in the time of Shishak's invasion, the first great reverse of the royal family of David. It ends with a Doxology, closing the Third Book of the Psalms.

Christian application. Prophetic of Christ's universal dominion,—appointed for Christmas Day.

5. *Congregation of the saints.* The holy ones, the Angels. So ver. 7.

10. *Rahab.* Egypt, as in P. B. V. Reference is probably to the destruction of Pharaoh's army at the time of the Exodus.

12. *Tabor.* A mountain in north-east of plain of Esdraelon, noted for its beauty and verdure.

30. Cp. 2 Sam. vii. 14-16.

37. *Faithful witness.* Most probably God Himself is meant, though some suppose the rainbow, or the moon. Cp. Job xvi. 19.

40. This verse describes the ruin and havoc made by Shishak. See 2 Chron. xii. 4.

43. *Turned the edge, etc.* Describes ignominious submission of Judah.

50. *The reproach of Thy servants, etc.* Such would be the feelings of one who, like Ethan, recollected the glorious days of David and Solomon.

51. *Have reproached the footsteps.* Or, as we might say, "Dogged the heels" of Thine Anointed, Thy Christ; truly fulfilled in the treatment of Jesus Christ.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XC. [Commences Fourth Book of the Psalter, xc—cvi.]

Historical occasion. Probably the oldest, as it is one

of the most sublime, of the Psalms, and with very little doubt written by Moses, bewailing the sin of the people at Kadesh.

Christian application. This is shown by its use in the Office for the Burial of the Dead. The Psalm gives utterance to the thoughts of the Christian as clearly as it did to those of Moses or any other ancient Israelite.

3. *Return, ye children of men.* Of doubtful meaning. The two most probable meanings are (1) Return to the dust (Gen. iii. 19), and (2) As soon as one generation dies, let another come in its place (Eccl. i. 4). Either sets in strong contrast God's eternity and man's constant changeableness. Cp. Ps. civ. 28-30.

6. *It is cut down.* P. B. V. inserts "dried up," but without any authority.

10. *The days of our years, etc.* The lives of Moses, Aaron, Miriam and Joshua extended beyond what had already become the ordinary length of human life. See also especially Caleb's words (Josh. xiv. 10), as showing that at eighty-five he was an instance of unusual longevity.

15. A reference to the forty years' wandering?

PSALM XCI.

Historical occasion. Quite uncertain. It is the first of a series of Psalms (xci-c.) celebrating Jehovah's praises, and evidently intended for the Temple worship. This, as nearly all the Psalms of Book IV., is anonymous. It is a meditative Psalm, the author at one time speaking in the first person, and sometimes addressing himself, according to the varying feeling of the moment, and finally (vv. 14-16) seeming to hear God's voice speaking to him.

Christian application. The Christian may well use this beautiful Psalm as an expression of his own trust and confidence in God.

3. *Snare of the fowler.* Cp. Ps. cxxiv. 7; and for its spiritual meaning see 2 Tim. ii. 26.

4. Allusion here to the cherubim covering the mercy-seat with their wings. 1 Kings viii. 7.

10. *Thy dwelling.* Literally, Thy tent. Perhaps points to the Psalm being a pilgrim song.

11, 12. Partly quoted by Satan against our Lord in the wilderness. In regard to the ministry of angels, we may compare Exod. xxiii. 20 (where the very same expression is used as here), Heb. i. 14, etc.

16. *With long life.* The great temporal blessing of the Old Testament, speaking spiritually of the eternal life. This Psalm should be read side by side with the words of Eliphaz the Temanite, Job v. 17-26.

PSALM XCII.

Historical occasion. Composed for use in the Temple service, but at what date is uncertain. See inscription.

Christian application. For the Christian it is a song of thankfulness to God, and of joyful looking forward, enemies triumphed over, to the Heavenly Sabbath.

6. *Brutish man.* One in a state of nature.

*Fool.*¹ Literally, "fleshy." Cp. the word "carnal" in St. Paul's Epistles. The Psalmist feels that communion with God is the real difference between the righteous man and the wicked.

10. *Unicorn.* The buffalo, or wild ox.

¹ These two words, "brutish" and "fool," occur but three times in the Psalms, and always together (Ps. xlix. 10, xciv. 8). Brutish however occurs Ps. lxxiii. 22, but is there translated "foolish."

12. *The palm tree—the cedar.* These two trees, emblem the one of long life and productiveness, the other of firmness and grandeur, complete together the picture of the spiritually-minded man.

13. The courts of the Temple were probably planted with trees for the sake of shade.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XCIII.

Historical occasion. Doubtful; perhaps after the return from the Captivity. It was composed for the Temple worship.

Christian application. As setting forth the triumph of Jehovah, it may well be regarded as prophetic of Christ's reign over the world.

3. *The floods.* Great rivers and the sea are used in the Bible as emblems of the powers of the world as arrayed against God. Cp. Isa. viii. 7.

Thine house. Possibly a reference to Temple rebuilt under Zerubbabel.

PSALM XCIV.

Historical occasion. A time of internal corruption and of oppression of the weak by the strong, of God's servants by the unbelievers, rather than of suffering from a foreign foe. The reign of Ahaz or Manasseh might have been such a time.

Christian application. The Christian, puzzled perhaps, as the ancient Israelite was, by God's dealings with men, can wait His time for a solution of all difficulties (vv. 12-14). Cp. Heb. xii. 5-7.

3. *How long.* Cp. Rev. vi. 10.

7. *The Lord shall not see.* The language this of Israelite, not of foreign, oppressors.

10. *Shall not He know.* Not in Hebrew, and unnecessary. The P. B. V. is better.

11. Quoted by St. Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 20. So far from not observing (ver. 7), God reads even men's thoughts.

15. *But judgment, etc.* Whatever may be present difficulties, God's dealings, and His judgments, will be seen in the end to be truly righteous, and His faithful servants (the true in heart) will acknowledge (follow) it.

17. *In silence.* The silence of the grave.

20. *Shall the throne, etc.* God does not wink at any injustice committed in the name of law. As instances of this "framing mischief by a law," see case of Naboth (1 Kings xxi.), and especially that of our Lord.

21. *The righteous.* The word is in the singular. *The innocent blood.* Cp. words of Judas and Pilate (Matt. xxvii. 4, 24). The verse is truly Messianic.

NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XCV.

Historical occasion. Doubtful; probably a post-Captivity Psalm.

Christian application. Used, from the earliest times, in the daily service of the Church. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows that warnings of Psalm are as much for Christians as for Jews. It distinctly ascribes it to the Holy Ghost (iii. 7-11), and speaks of it as "in David," i.e. "in the Psalms" (iv. 7).

6. *Our Maker.* In reference not to creation, but to Israel's adoption as God's chosen people (see Deut. xxxii. 15, 18). And so the Christian may apply it.

7. *To-day.* The present time ; there must be no postponement of obedience. See Heb. iii. 13.

8. *As in the provocation, etc.* Literally, "as at Meribah ; as in the day of Massah." Two places were called Meribah. Exod. xvii. 2, 7 ; Numb. xx. 13.

10. *Do err.* Wander. *My ways.* In allusion probably to Exod. xiii. 17, 18, xxiii. 20.

11. *I swear.* See Numb. xiv. *My rest.* The Canaan rest of Israel was a type of the Christian's rest in Heaven. See Heb. iii. iv.

PSALM XCVI.

Historical occasion. In the first instance, the bringing of the Ark by David to Mount Zion, in connection with which event it is found to a great extent in 1 Chron. xvi. It appears to have been re-cast, and to have received its present form after the return from the Babylonish Captivity.¹

Christian application. The Psalm is prophetic of Christ's reign. It has been not inaptly called "a missionary hymn for all ages."

1. *A new song.* Not the Psalm itself, but the hymn of adoration to be sung when Jehovah enters His Kingdom. Cp. Rev. xv. 3, and see Isa. xlii. 10.

5. *Idols, i.e. vanities.* Cp. 1 Cor. viii. 4 ; Isa. ii. 8, 18-20, xlv. 10.

6. *Sanctuary.* In 1 Chron. xvi. 27 it is "place." In Isa. lx. 13 we have "the place of My Sanctuary."

7-9. Borrowed in part from Ps. xxix. 1-3. *The beauty of holiness.* See note on Ps. xxix. 2. It is the wedding-garment of Christ's parable.²

¹ This explanation is suggested by the LXX. title of the Psalm, which is "A Psalm of David, when the Temple was built after the Captivity."

² Delitsch.

11. *Let the heavens, etc.* The curse under which it groaned being removed, all creation rejoices. Cp. St. Paul, Rom. viii. 21, 22.

12. *Trees of the wood.* Possibly a reference to the tarrying of the ark at Kirjath-jearim (1 Sam. vii. 1, 2), or "The city of the woods." Cp. also Isa. xlv. 23, lv. 12.

13. *For He cometh.* Cp. Jude 14; 15.

PSALM XCVII.

Historical occasion. Probably some great national deliverance, when the heart of the people was brought back to acknowledge "Jehovah is King."

Christian application. The Psalm celebrates the setting-forth of God's glory among all nations, and is prophetic therefore of the first, and also of the second coming of our Lord.

1. *The isles.* See Ps. lxxii. 10, note. Cp. Isa. xlii. 4, etc.

2. *Clouds and darkness.* 3. *Fire.* Cp. Deut. iv. 11, v. 22.

4, 5. Possibly some late convulsion of nature (see Amos i. 1; Zech. xiv. 5) is still in fresh remembrance. Cp. Mic. i. 4; Isa. xl. 4, 5.

7. *All ye gods.* Angels, as in Heb. i. 6.

11. *Light is sown.* Cp. Ps. cxii. 4, and see Paradise Lost, v. 1, 2.

NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM XCVIII.

Historical occasion. Almost certainly the same as Ps. xcvi. The two, from their similarity, are doubtless by same author.

Christian application. The Psalm looks forward to future ages, and sings of the triumphs of Christ, and of His coming. Such a Psalm is fitly used in daily evening prayer of our Church.

1. *A new song.* See Ps. xcvi. 1, note.
3. *All the ends, etc.* So Isa. lii. 10.
6. *Cornet.* P. B. V. has *shawm*. A species of clarionet.
8. *The floods, etc.* Cp. Isa. lv. 12.

PSALM XCIX.

Historical occasion. The same probably as the preceding. The thought of the Psalm is first of the Holiness of God (1-5), and then second of the real priesthood (Exod. xix. 6; 1 Peter ii. 9) of all true worshippers of God.

Christian application. As in the four preceding Psalms, the coming of Jesus Christ, and His reign over the earth, is in reality announced. Cp. Rev. xi. 15-18.

1. *Between the Cherubim.* Exod. xxv. 22; Isa. xxxvii. 16. See Ps. lxxx. 1, note.
3. *It (or, He) is Holy.* So vv. 5 and 9. For the thrice repetition, cp. Isa. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8.
4. *The King.* Jehovah.
5. *At His footstool.* The Mercy-Seat. See 1 Chron. xxviii. 2; cp. Isa. lx. 13.
6. *They called, etc.* These three, the types of the Priesthood of their nation, were all mighty in prayer. See, e.g., Exod. xxxii. 31, 32; Numb. xvi. 48; 1 Sam. vii. 8, 9; cp. Jer. xv. 1.
8. *Thou tookest vengeance, i.e. on the people at large, for their misdeeds (inventions).*

PSALM C.

Historical occasion. The same, doubtless, as the

preceding. Each of the four verses is a call to praise and adoration.

Christian application. The Psalm is prophetic of Jehovah's reign over all the earth, and prepares us for the thought of the "Good Shepherd." Hence its universal use, in many versions, among Christians in their daily worship.

3. *Not we ourselves.* The marginal reading "His we are" is perhaps better. Cp. Ps. xcv. 7; Isa. xliii. 1.

4, 5. These verses are a true note of Gospel times. The Psalm invites to that of which Isaiah prophesies (Isa. ii. 2, 3).

PSALM CI.

Historical occasion. The Psalm is the prayer of a king, almost certainly David, desiring and striving after personal holiness, and the purity of his family and court. The Ark probably was still in the house of Obed-Edom (see ver. 2, which seems to hint at a longing for its presence in Jerusalem).

Christian application. The Psalm may be well used as a preparation for the Holy Communion by the devout soul which prays, "Oh, when wilt Thou come unto me?"^x

2. *I will behave myself wisely.* How suggestive these words of the need of personal holiness. Cp. Ps. xv. and xxiv.; also 1 Pet. i. 15.

5. *Privily slandereth.* Cp. Catechism, "to keep my tongue from slandering."

8. *Early.* Literally, "each morning." The work of purification is continuous; it can never be relaxed.

^x Bishop Wordsworth.

LESSON IX.

TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CII.

Historical occasion. The Psalm appears to have been written towards the close of the Captivity (vv. 13, 14) by one whose private griefs were intensified by the thought of his country's sorrows. Some, comparing Psalm with Dan. ix., would ascribe it to that prophet. Others suggest Nehemiah as the author, some seventy or eighty years later, and connect the Psalm with the impressions derived from his ride round Jerusalem (Neh. ii. 11-20).

Christian application. The use made of vv. 25-27 in Ep. to Hebrews (i. 10-12) clearly shows the Messianic application of the Psalm. Its appointment for use (as the fifth of the Penitential Psalms) on Ash Wednesday shows the sense of the Church, that it expresses the feelings of each of her members in times of sorrow, as it does those of Her Divine Lord. Cp. vv. 20, 21, with Luke iv. 18.

6. *A pelican.* So Lev. xi. 18, or cormorant, as in Isa. xxxiv. 11; Zeph. ii. 14.

7. *Sparrow.* Some lonely bird. Thomson, "Land and Book," p. 43.

11. *Declineth.* The lengthening shadow, as the sun declines.

13. *The set time.* This expression points to the end of the seventy years. But it may be applied to Nehemiah's time (cp. v. 14 with Neh. ii. 17-20, iv. 2).

17. *The destitute.* Or still more accurately, as P. B. V., "The poor destitute."

27. *Thou art the same.* Literally, "Thou art He." Cp. Isa. xli. 4, xlvi. 4.

PSALM CIII.

Historical occasion. Quite uncertain. The Syriac version ascribes it to David in his old age. It is a beautiful Psalm of God's love and care.

Christian application. It may well be used by any one who, tried by sin and sorrow, has felt God's mercy in the midst of all.

1. *All within me.* Every faculty of body, soul and spirit is to be enlisted in the praise of Jehovah.

5. *Thy mouth.* Same word as in Ps. xxxii. 9, where see note. Perhaps here it means "age," but meaning is very doubtful.

The eagle's. An allusion perhaps to ancient fable of the eagle's renewing its youth; but more probably P. B. V. is correct, the eagle being often an emblem of strength. See Deut. xxviii. 49; Is. xl. 31.

7. *His ways.* Cp. Exod. xxxiii. 13-19, xxxiv. 6. *His acts.* Exod. xxxiv. 10.

12. *Removed our transgressions.* How prophetic are these words of the work of JESUS CHRIST! Cp. Isa. xxxviii. 17; Mic. vii. 19.

13. *As a father.* Cp. Rom. viii. 15; Matt. vi. 9.

16. *The wind passeth, etc.* Cp. Jer. li. 1; Ezek. xvii. 10.

17. *Them that fear Him.* For third time condition of God's mercy is repeated. See vv. 11, 13.

20-22. Cp. the threefold blessing in Numb. vi. 23-27.

TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CIV.

Historical occasion. Quite uncertain. The Psalm was no doubt intended for the Temple worship. It is a grand lyric ode in praise of God's work in the creation of the universe. It follows fairly regularly the

work of creation described in Gen. i.; 2-4. Work of first and second days (Gen. i. 3-8); 5-18. The earth from a state of chaos (5, 6, Gen. i. 2) becomes fitted for animal life; Work of third day (Gen. i. 9-13); 19-24. Work of fourth day (Gen. i. 14-19), with a general reflection upon the variety and greatness of God's work; 25, 26. Work of fifth day (Gen. i. 21); which with work of sixth day has in former verses been already incidentally mentioned; 27-30. Everything in creation depends upon God; 31-35. A Hallelujah to God, with a prayer that sin may be banished.

Christian application. By appointing this Psalm for use on Whitsun Day, the Church teaches us that the same Holy Spirit who descended upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost was the great Divine Agent as well at the first as at what may be called the second creation (Gen. i. 2; John iii. 5).

2. *Like a curtain.* The Psalmist mentally compares the heavens with the curtain covering the Tabernacle. Cp. Exod. xxxvi. 14.

5. Cp. Job xxvi. 7.

8. *They go up, etc.* Literally, as margin, "the mountains ascend, the valleys descend." See Gen. i. 9; Cp. Paradise Lost, vii.

14. *Food.* Literally, bread. The mention of corn, wine and oil (vv. 14, 15) reminds us of Moses' description of the Promised Land (Deut. xi. 14).

18. *Conies.* Old English for "rabbit." The animal intended is the *Hyrax Syriacus*, for which there is no English name. It is of the same size as a rabbit, weak and defenceless. The animal is mentioned in Lev. xi. 5; Deut. xiv. 7; Prov. xxx. 26.

19. *The moon for seasons.* Feasts were fixed by the moon. Cp. Lev. xxiii. 4-6; Numb. xxviii.; Isa. i. 13, 14.

26. *Leviathan*. Not, as in Ps. lxxiv. 14, the "crocodile," which is not a marine animal (the "great and wide sea" being the Mediterranean), but any sea-monster, perhaps the whale.

29, 30. How beautiful a picture of the working of the Holy Spirit do these verses present to us.

35. *Praise ye the Lord*. Heb. "Hallelujah." The first occurrence, henceforth to be frequent, of this word in the Psalms. It was used in Jeremiah's time as a liturgical formula (xxxiii. 11), to commence (see Ps. cxi etc.) or conclude a Psalm.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CV.

Historical occasion. Verses 1-15 are found in 1 Chr xvi. 8-22, on the occasion of the Ark being brought to Mount Zion. Probably some such account of this Psalm may be given as of Ps. xcvi., the note on which see. Cp. Neh. ix. 5-15. The Psalm is highly picturesque in its structure. It may be divided thus;—1-7. Introduction; a call to remembrance of God's mercies; 8-15. The promise to, and God's care of, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; 16-22. The famine in Egypt; Joseph's mission; 23-26. Israel oppressed; the mission of Moses and Aaron; 27-38. The Plagues upon Egypt; the people delivered; 39-45. The triumphant march through the wilderness into the Promised Land.

Christian application. The Christian must ever feel, in reading these historical Psalms, that all these things happened unto them for ensamples unto us.

8. *A thousand generations*. Cp. Deut. vii. 9. The covenant was made with Abraham (Gen. xvii. 5), confirmed (xxii. 16-18), and renewed to Isaac (xxvi. 3) and to Jacob (xxviii. 13, 14, xxxv. 12).

11. *The lot.* The line by which the portion was measured out.

12. *A few men, etc.* Literally "men of number," easily counted. The Psalmist in thought contrasts their first number with the promise to Abraham (Gen. xiii. 16).

15. *Mine anointed.* Literally, "my Messiahs," or consecrated ones. What was really an ordinance of a later age is here applied to the patriarchs, who were never actually anointed.

19. *His word came.* Either (1) Joseph's interpretation of the dreams coming true, or (2) God's word of promise about Joseph being fulfilled.

Tried him. Either (1) Joseph's faith and patience had been tried by the long waiting for the fulfilment of God's promise, or (2) Joseph's interpretation of the dreams was the trial of his veracity.

28. *Darkness.* The last plague but one is put first. Then the others beginning with first follow in regular order, except that the fifth plague (murrain of beasts) and sixth (boils and blains) are omitted entirely.

31. *Lice.* Rather "gnats."

34. *Caterpillars.* Most probably the larvæ or young of the locust. Cp. Joel i. 4, where it is translated "cankerworm."

37. *Not one feeble.* Rather "not one that stumbled." Cp. Isa. v. 27, lxiii. 13.

40. *Bread of heaven.* The manna. Cp. John vi. 32.

45. *That they might observe, etc.* Cp. the object of Christ's sufferings, Tit. ii. 14.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CVI.

Historical occasion. Ps. ev. is a joyous retrospect of God's past blessings and mercies to Israel; this

Psalms is also a retrospect, but one of confession for their many backslidings, both in the wilderness and in Canaan. It was probably a recast, after the Captivity, of some earlier Psalms. Cp. 1 Chron. xvi. 34-36 with verses 1, 47, 48; Neh. ix. 16-30. It closes with a Doxology, which ends the Fourth Book of the Psalter.

Christian application. The history of Israel affords instruction to Christians at all times. Cp. 1 Cor. x. 1-12; Heb. iii. 7-19. In the sins of Israel the Christian too may see a picture of his own transgressions.

6. *We have sinned.* Cp. Solomon's prayer, 1 Kings viii. 47.

12. *Then believed they, etc.* In allusion to Exod. xiv. 31, xv. 1.

14. The following acts of faithlessness are mentioned: The lusting after flesh (ver. 14); the rebellion of Korah, etc. (vv. 16-18); the golden calf (vv. 19-23); the refusal to enter the Promised Land (vv. 24-27); the idolatry in Moab (vv. 28-31); the murmuring for water at Kadesh (vv. 32, 33); the imperfect conquest of Canaan, and their consequent sin (vv. 34-39). Cp. Judges i.

20. *Their glory.* Jehovah, their God. Cp. Deut. iv. 6-8; Jer. ii. 11.

23. *In the breach.* As a soldier guarding a breach made in the wall.

24. *The pleasant land.* Cp. Jer. iii. 19; Zech. vii. 14.

28. *Baal-peor.* The God of Moab. *Of the dead.* The idols of Moab were as dead.

30. *Executed judgment.* Better than "prayed" of P. B. V. Numb. xxv. 7.

31. *Counted for righteousness.* Cp. Gen. xv. 6; James ii. 20-26; Rom. iv. 3, 9. 22; Gal. iii. 6.

32. *Waters of strife.* Literally, "waters of Meribah."

33. *Provoked his spirit.* Better, "They rebelled (Numb. xx. 10) against His Spirit." "While they rebelled against the Spirit of the Lord, Moses was so far affected by their rebellious unbelief, that he momentarily became weak in faith, and doubting words fell from his lips."^x

37. *Unto devils.* False gods. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 17.

41. Cp. accounts of different servitudes, as given in Judges.

44, 45. Cp. Lev. xxvi. 40-42 ; 1 Kings viii. 28-30, 50.

46. *To be pitied.* As Jehoiachin, 2 Kings xxv. 27. So Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah.

47. *Gather us, etc.* As God had promised, Deut. xxx. 3, 4. See also Isa. xi., xii.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CVII. [Commences Fifth Book of the Psalter ; cvii—cl.]

Historical occasion. Written doubtless by a Babylonian captive on the eve of the return of his nation to Judæa. But the Psalm is rather liturgical than historical. It may be divided thus ;—1-3. Introduction, ver. 1, perhaps by chorus, vv. 2, 3, by leader or priest. Then thanks for deliverance, (1) 4-9, from wandering and famine in the wilderness, (2) 10-16, from prison, (3) 17-22, from sickness, (4) 23-32, from storm at sea. The Psalm closes (33-43) with praise of God for His mercies. Vv. 1, 8, 15, 21, 31, 43, were perhaps sung in chorus, the remainder by a single voice.

Christian application. In the groups of people who are described as praising God for deliverance, the

^x Hengstenberg. Cp. Perowne, Moll.

Christian may see the spiritual history of Christ's Church, and his own.

3. *From the south.* Literally, "from the sea." To a person writing in Babylonia the Persian Gulf would be the south; to one in Palestine the sea (Mediterranean) would be the west.

8. *Oh that men.* Rather, "Oh that *these*," referring to the persons just mentioned. So in vv. 15, 21, 31.

10. *Darkness, etc.* This and several other expressions in this Psalm show familiarity with the older Scriptures, especially perhaps Isaiah and Job. See Isa. ix. 2, xlii. 7, xlix. 9; Micah vii. 8.

Affliction. See Job xxxvi. 8.

16. *Gates of brass.* Cp. Isa. xlv. 2.

17. *Are afflicted.* More forcibly, "bring affliction on themselves."

20. *Sent His word.* Cp. John i. 10, 14, 18, iii. 17.

Destructions. Lit. "grave-pits." Cp. Job xxxiii. 18, 22.

23. *Ships.* Not till Solomon's time did the Jews thus "go down." Ps. civ. 26.

25-30. Cp. Jonah's Psalm (chap. ii. 3-7).

35. Cp. Isa. xli. 18. See on ver. 10.

40. Quoted from Job xii. 21-24.

43. So Hosea xiv. 9.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CVIII.

Historical occasion. The return from the Captivity. This Psalm is simply a compilation from two Psalms of David (lvii. and lx.). It thus shows something of the interest taken by the Jews in this Book of Psalms, and how they adapted them to every phase of their national history.

Christian application. As a proper Psalm for Ascension Day, we may regard it as prophetic of the great event then commemorated. See especially ver. 5.

1-5. Taken from Ps. lvii. 7-11 ; 6-13 from Ps. lx. 5-12. See notes on those Psalms.

PSALM CIX.

Historical occasion. Some incident in David's life probably which called forth all those deep-laid feelings of vengeance, natural even to persecuted righteousness till chastened and purified by the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Christian application. We are taught by St. Peter (Acts i. 20) to see in this Psalm a prophecy of our Blessed Lord's betrayal ; and from John ii. 17 we see how the Apostles understood the 69th Psalm, and therefore doubtless this, as spoken by our Lord. Its language is indeed too fearful to be used by any man of his fellow-men. Cp. Rev. vi. 16.¹

6. *Satan.* Rather, "an adversary" as more general. Cp. Zech. iii. 1.

22. *Poor and needy.* The Messiah is here speaking of His suffering.

25. *Shaked their heads.* Ps. xxii. 6, 7 ; Matt. xxvii. 39.

¹ Another explanation is, that vv. 6-19 are the recital of what the Psalmist's adversaries said against him, and that in ver. 20 the Psalmist gathers all their maledictions into one, and hurls them back upon his foes. This view is supported by the fact of the change of person in ver. 6, and again in v. 20. It does not, however, get rid of the difficulty felt about the curses, as it allows ver. 20 to be the Psalmist's. Moreover, St. Peter's use of ver. 8 militates against this view, although the Apostle may simply have quoted it as illustrating the case of Judas. And so St. John (ii. 17) may have quoted Ps. lxix. 9. See note on Ps. lxix. 22-28, page 61.

LESSON X.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CX.

Historical occasion. Perhaps some setting out for war, the Priest encouraging the King. In any case, our Lord teaches us (Matt. xxii. 42-45; Mark xii. 35-37) that it was a conscious utterance of David, under Divine inspiration, respecting the Messiah. It, of all O. T. passages, is most frequently cited in N. T. See above, and Acts ii. 34, 35; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. i. 13, v. 6, vii. 17, 21, x. 13; Luke xx. 41-44.

Christian application. As prophetic of the Sonship and Kingly office of the Messiah and of His victory over His enemies, it is fitly appointed for Christmas Day.

2. *Rod of thy strength.* The staff or sceptre, as an emblem of power. Cp. Jer. xlvi. 17. *

3. *In the beauties of holiness.*¹ In holy garments, in holy array.

From the womb of the morning, etc. Means either (1) that as the dew is seen in the morning glistening in a multitude of drops on the grass, having come silently and unobserved, so shall Thy followers spring up silently, in great multitude, with ever-renewed youth, or (2) that the life of Christ our Lord is, as the dew, ever fresh, springing up again and again, often silently and unexpectedly, in the hearts of His disciples. Cp. 2 Sam. xvii. 12, xxiii. 4.

¹ The *stop* should be after "holiness," *not* after "morning." The punctuation is correct in P. B. V.

4. *Melchizedek.* As was Melchizedek, so the Messiah is King and Priest. In Ep. to Hebrews (vii.) it is shown that the priesthood of Melchizedek typified the eternity of Christ's priesthood (vii. 3); and its universality, in that it was before the law, and was Gentile and not Jewish.

6. *The dead bodies.* Picture of the carnage of a battle-field.

Wound the heads, i.e. the chief men of many nations.

7. *He shall drink.* By slaking his thirst at the way-side brook, the victor gathers fresh strength for pursuit. The early fathers interpret this verse of Christ's cup of suffering and subsequent exaltation. Cp. Phil. ii. 8, 9.

PSALM CXI. (An Alphabetical Psalm.)

Historical occasion. Uncertain. It was probably composed for Temple worship. The Psalm throughout praises the works of God and His greatness.

Christian application. As a proper Psalm for Easter Day, it teaches us that God's promises and covenant were really fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and in His victory over death.

1. *The upright.* An inner circle of God's people. Outside is the general congregation. Exact sense given in P. B. V.

5. *Given meat.* As in the wilderness. The Christian may use the verse of the spiritual food received in the Holy Communion.

10. *The fear of the Lord.* Cp. Prov. i. 7, ix. 10; Job xxviii. 28.

PSALM CXII. (An Alphabetical Psalm.)

Historical occasion. See above on Ps. cxi.

Christian application. As Ps. cxi. spoke of God's righteousness, so does this of that derived from Him by His faithful servants. The Christian may therefore use it as descriptive (1) of Jesus Christ, (2) of His true disciples.

4. *A light.* Cp. Isa. lx. 1, and Symeon's song, Luke ii. 32.

5. *A good man, etc.* Rather, "Happy is it with the man who showeth," etc. Cp. Isa. iii. 10.

9. *He hath dispersed, etc.* Quoted by St. Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 9. Cp. Prov. xi. 24.

PSALM CXIII.

Historical occasion. This, with next five Psalms, formed "The Hallel," or Hymn of Praise sung at the Three Great Festivals, at the New Moons, and the Feast of the Dedication. At the Passover, Ps. cxiii. and cxiv. were sung before the Paschal meal, and when it was concluded then the remaining Psalms. See Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26.

Christian application. As Paschal hymns of praise for deliverance, the Church fitly appoints this and Ps. cxiv. for Easter Day.

5, 6. The contrast between the "high dwelling" and "the humbling" is well conveyed by the insertion of "and yet" in P. B. V.

7-9. Compare Hannah's song, and Mary's.

9. *To keep house.* To have a home, that is, with its laughter and joy of children. Cp. Exod. i. 21; 2 Sam. vii. 11.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXIV.

Historical occasion. See on Ps. cxiii. This Psalm

presents us with a very fine and grand picture of the Exodus and entrance into Canaan. For rapidity of action, abruptness and fire, with firmly-seated faith, this Psalm perhaps has no equal.

Christian application. See on Ps. cxiii.

8. *The rock.* Cp. 1 Cor. x. 4.

PSALM CXV.

Historical occasion. A post-Captivity Psalm, full of rejoicing at the return to Judæa; probably intended for Temple worship. Some think that vv. 12-15 were sung by the priest, and the other verses by the congregation.

Christian application. As a Psalm of thanksgiving for abundant mercies, it may well be used by us, of whom God has indeed been mindful, in giving His only Son to die for us.

4-8. These verses show how, during the seventy years' Captivity, the very thought of idolatry had become hateful to the Hebrews.

12. *Hath been—will.* The past is an earnest of the future.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXVI.

Historical occasion. Some incident perhaps of private life. The Psalm is no doubt of late date. From allusions to Psalms, evidently of David's time, we see what a deep impression he had made on the national mind.

Christian application. Any Christian who has passed through sorrow and trouble, and has found relief, can express his thankfulness to God for the benefits done unto him, in the words of this Psalm.

7. *Thy rest, etc.* The rest arising from trust in God.

10. *I believed, etc.* Meaning not clear, but is quoted in sense of A. V. by St. Paul (2 Cor. iv. 13).

13. *The cup of salvation.* The cup of thanksgiving, for deliverances received. The Christian may apply it to the "Cup of blessing" in 1 Cor. x. 16.

15. *Precious in the sight, etc.* God values very highly the life of any one of His servants.

16. *Son of Thine handmaid.* See Ps. lxxxvi. 16. note.

PSALM CXVII.

Historical occasion. Of late date, this Psalm, without any special occasion for its composition, breathes the wider sympathies always possessed by the finer spirits of the Hebrew people, and which found its full expression under the Gospel. See Deut. xxxii. 43; Rom. xv. 11. The Psalm was used probably in the Temple service as a doxology after other Psalms.

PSALM CXVIII.

Historical occasion. Uncertain, though the Psalm is of late date. Most probably, it was composed for the Feast of the Dedication of the second Temple (Ezra vi. 16-22). See vv. 19, 20, 22. It may be divided thus;—1-4. Full choral opening; 5-13. The call upon God in distress, with strong expressions of confidence—sung perhaps by half the choir; 14-18. Thanksgiving for deliverance—full choir; 19-27. Mingled prayer and praise—by half the choir; 28, 29. Full choral ending.

Christian application. From the very frequent allusion to or quotation of ver. 22 in the New Testament, and from the use made of vv. 25, 26 by the multitudes on our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, the Psalm becomes to the Christian a prophecy of His Divine

Lord. It was referred to the Messiah even by the Jews themselves, and is appropriate (see especially vv. 17-27) as a proper Psalm for Easter Day.

1. *O give thanks, etc.* A common form of thanksgiving. See 1 Chron xvi. 34; 2 Chron. v. 13; Jer. xxxiii. 11; Ezra iii. 11.

10, 11. *All nations, etc.* In allusion perhaps to difficulties mentioned in Ezra iv.

12. *Like bees.* Cp. Deut. i. 44. *Fire of thorns* quickly dies out.

22. *The stone.* Cp. the word of encouragement given by the prophet Zechariah (iv. 6-10) to Zerubbabel at the laying the foundation of the second Temple. But its highest reference is to our Lord. See Isa. xxviii. 16; Acts iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7.

24. *This is the day.* The Lord's Day—the day of Christ's Resurrection.

*TWENTY-FOURTH DAY,—EVENING PRAYER; TO
THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY,—EVENING PRAYER.*

PSALM CXIX.

Historical occasion. None suit it so well as the restoration of the Law under Ezra, who probably composed the Psalm. It is the longest and most elaborate of all the Psalms. It sets forth in fervent and glowing language the beauties of God's law, and the spiritual knowledge and blessedness which come of obedience to it. In every verse save two (122 and 132) mention is made of the law under one or other of the various names (or words) by which it was known to the Jews. In its structure the Psalm is highly artificial. Each of its twenty-two divisions of eight verses

begins with a different letter, going regularly through the Hebrew alphabet; and the same letter commences each verse of a division. In each division "some special excellence of God's law is celebrated."

Christian application. The pious Israelite saw, as this Psalm shows us, much of the depth of teaching in God's law given through Moses;—how much more may this Psalm express the feelings of the Christian, instructed, as he has been, by Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

7. *Thy judgments.* Word used here, and throughout the Psalm, in the sense of "law," "decrees," "precepts."

46. *Before kings.* Cp. Ezra vii. 11-28; Neh. ii. 1-8.

54. *In the house of my pilgrimage.* In the place where I have been in exile.

69. *Forged a lie.* "Have patched up a lie," as against Nehemiah (vi. 6-13).

83. *A bottle.* A picture, either (1) of the sad effect of trouble upon the Psalmist's life, as the shrivelling effect of smoke upon a skin bottle, or (2) of the ripening of his spiritual life through trial and sorrow, even as the wine was mellowed, by the bottles containing it being hung up in the smoke.

96. *I have seen, etc.* The meaning seems to be, that everything else has its season and time, and passes away, but God's law is infinite and everlasting.

100. *The ancients.* The aged men.

119. *Like dross.* Cp. Jer. vi. 28-30; Ezek. xxii. 18-22.

126. *Made void.* See the account in Ezra (x. 18) and Nehemiah (xiii. 4-7).

127. *Yea, above fine gold.* P. B. V. has "and precious stone," following the LXX., and so losing the parallelism of the verse.

140. *Very pure.* P. B. V. "tried to the uttermost." The purity is the result of the trial. Cp. Ps. xii. 6.

164. *Seven times, i.e. again and again.* Cp. Ps. lv. 17.

165. *Nothing shall offend them.* Things which occasion difficulty and doubt to others do not to them. And so St. John says, 1 Ep. ii. 10.

176. *I have gone astray, etc.* In spite of much watchfulness and great love, there are many failings. Cp. Luke xvii. 10.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXX.

Historical occasion. This Psalm, with the next fourteen, form a kind of Psalter within a Psalter. They are all called "songs of the goings-up" (A. V. songs of degrees). They were evidently (see cxxvi.) collected into their present form after the Captivity. They were probably sung by the pilgrims from the rest of the Holy Land, as they went up (cp. John xii. 20) annually to keep the feasts in Jerusalem. Except Ps. cxxxii., these fifteen Psalms are all very short, and express each but one thought, hope, or feeling. This Ps. cxx. is a prayer for deliverance from the calumnies of his enemies.

Christian application. Both this Ps. cxx. and all the "songs of the goings-up"¹ can be used by the Christian as reflecting and expressing his own spiritual experience, whether of joy or sorrow.

3, 4. Either describe more fully the false tongue already spoken of (cp. Jer. ix. 8; James iii. 6), or the punishment awaiting it. Second perhaps better.

¹ Except perhaps Ps. cxxxii., which see.

Juniper. Broom, used for firewood.

5. *Mesech.* A wild tribe dwelling at the northern limit of the then known world, at the foot of the Caucasus (see Gen. x. 2).

Kedar. The representative tribe of the southern limit, South Arabia (cp. Song of Solomon i. 5; Isa. xxi. 13-17). These tribes are mentioned with a sort of horror, as extreme types of barbarism.

PSALM CXXI.

1. *The hills.* Of the Holy Land (cp. Nah. i. 15); to the Christian, of the heavenly country.

6. *Smite thee.* Sunstroke is a great danger in hot countries, (cp. 2 Kings iv. 18-20; Jonah iv. 8). So too the moon is known, in South America for instance, to exercise a bad effect on the eyes of one sleeping in the open air in the moonlight.

8. *Thy going out, etc.* Cp. Deut. xxviii. 6.

PSALM CXXII.

3. *Compact.* Effect of first sight of Jerusalem upon the pilgrim.

4. *The tribes go up.* In obedience to the law, Deut. xvi. 16.

4. *Unto the testimony, etc.* Rather a law, or ordinance, to Israel, which had been given by God.

6-9. A beautiful prayer, not destined to be fulfilled in the earthly (cp. Luke xix. 42), but only in the heavenly Jerusalem. Cp. Rev. xxi., xxii.

PSALM CXXIII.

2. *Unto the hand.* The servant of God awaits the

least sign of His will. The circumstances of Neh. ii. 1-8 answer well to this verse.

3. *Filled with contempt.* Cp. Neh. ii. 19 (where "we are despised" is literally "we are contempt") and iv. 4.

PSALM CXXIV.

1. *On our side.* With the thanksgiving of this Psalm, cp. the circumstances detailed in Neh. iv., vi.

3. *Quick.* Alive. Cp. Numb. xvi. 30, 33.

5. *Proud waters.* Powerful enemies. Isa. viii. 7, 8.

PSALM CXXV.

1. *They that trust.* The returned exiles in their great difficulties were encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, to one of whom this Psalm may be ascribed.

2. *So the Lord.* Cp. Zech. ii. 4, 5.

3. *The rod or sceptre, emblem of power.* Ezra iv. 3.
The lot of the righteous. The Holy Land.

5. *As turn aside.* Allusion perhaps to those Jews who sided with the enemies. Neh. vi. 10-14, xiii. 28-31.

LESSON XI.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXVI.

1. *When the Lord, etc.* The permission to the Jews to return to their own land was such a joyful fulfilling of prophecy, that it was like a dream. Job viii. 21.

4. *Turn again.* The first band of returned exiles was only a small company. The Psalmist now prays that those who were still in captivity might also return.

As the streams in the South. The meaning is "may they return to their land, bringing back joy and activity even as the rivers in the early spring, swollen by winter rains, fertilize the hot parched southern country."

Bearing precious seed. The allusion is to the many trials and afflictions of the Jews on their first return from captivity, and for many years after. But the seed they are sowing is precious, and will in the end bring forth good fruit. Cp. Hag. ii. 3-9, 17-19.

PSALM CXXVII.

1. *The house.* Either (1) the Temple, or (2) the house in which a man lives. So *the city*; either (1) Jerusalem, or (2) the particular city in which the man may be dwelling. Those who understand it in the first sense, either accept the Inscription—"of Solomon"—as correct, or regard the Psalm as an echo of Haggai's words of rebuke in chap. i. 2-11. If, as seems more likely, the second sense is correct, we have in this Psalm a very beautiful picture (of uncertain date) of the domestic life of a pious Israelite.

2. *His beloved sleep.* The meaning is "He blesseth His beloved while they sleep" unknown to themselves. They need not therefore be over-anxious or careful. Cp. Matt. vi. 25-34; Luke x. 41; 1 Pet. v. 7.

4. *Children of youth.* Children born to a man while he himself is yet young. Cp. Prov. v. 18; Gen. xxxvii. 3.

5. *In the gate.* The Eastern place of judgment. Deut xxi. 19; Ruth iv. 1. The reference seems however to be the promise made to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 17.

PSALM CXXVIII.

Another bright picture of the family life of the God-fearing Israelite, and of the blessings attending him; to encourage the newly returned exiles to live upright and pious lives. In a spiritual sense it may be taken to illustrate the fruitfulness of Christ's Church.

2. *The labour of thine hands.* The first part of the blessing. Cp. Lev. xxvi. 5-16, and Haggai i., ii.

3. *By the sides, i.e.* "in the inner parts." The words apply to the wife, whose duties are at home, not to the vine, which was not trained by the sides of the houses. The vine was the emblem of fruitfulness, and perhaps of dependence, as needing support; the olive, on the other hand, pictures strong vigorous life.¹

5. *Out of Zion.* As the dwelling-place of God, whence His blessings flow. Cp. Ps. iii. 4, xiv. 7.

The good of Jerusalem. The well-being of the state depended on the well-doing of its families.

PSALM CXXIX.

A strain of joy at deliverance from captivity.

¹ See Perowne.

1. *Many a time.* The history of Israel was one of constant conflict, often of defeat, sometimes of victory, of ever-repeated instances of God's mercy.

From my youth. The time spent in Egypt.

2. *Have not prevailed.* Cp. 2 Cor. iv. 8-10 for the Christian parallel.

3. *Furrows.* The wounds made by the lash on the slave's back. Cp. Isa. l. 6.

6. *Afore it groweth up.* Before it has had time to come to maturity. Cp. Isa. xxxvii. 27.

8. For the blessing, cp. Ruth ii. 4.

PSALM CXXX.

A Psalm of deep sorrow for sin, with a cry for mercy. It is the sixth of the Penitential Psalms, and is appropriately read on Ash Wednesday. The sorrow is perhaps national rather than personal.

1. *Out of the depths.* A frequent expression for heavy misery and affliction. Cp. Ps. lxix. 2-14; Isa. li. 10; Ezek. xxvii. 34.

4. *That Thou mayest be feared.* The effect of forgiveness on the truly penitent is fear, springing out of love, lest they should offend again. Cp. Jer. xxxiii. 9; 2 Cor. v. 14.

5. *In His Word, i.e.* His promise.

6. *They that watch, etc.* As a sentinel, as a sick man, as any who may have to keep awake all night. Cp. Deut. xxviii. 67.

8. *From all his iniquities.* Not from the punishment merely, but from the power and habit of sin.

PSALM CXXXI.

If not written by David, it breathes intensely his spirit of true humility. Cp. 2 Sam. vi. 22, xvi. 10.

1. Cp. Jer. xlv. 5.

2. *As a child that is weaned of his mother.* Rather, "as a weaned child upon his mother." Just as a child, after being weaned, no longer cries for the nourishment it at first missed, but reclines peacefully on its mother's bosom, so the Psalmist's soul, being broken it may be of its proud sinful longings, reclines upon God, and rests upon His promise.

3. Prayer that his nation may follow the Psalmist's example of patient hope.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXXII.

Historical occasion. This Psalm, in its length and the obscurity of its date and authorship, differs from the other Psalms of the goings-up. It seems most probable that it was composed for some reformation of the Temple service (see 2 Kings xii., xxii.), and afterwards appropriated by the returned exiles.

Christian application. The Psalm is Messianic, as St. Peter shows (Acts ii. 30), and the promise in ver. 11 renders it specially appropriate for Christmas Day.

1. *His afflictions.* Rather, "anxious cares," to build the Temple.

3. *Tabernacle of my house.* Poetical expression for his house.

6. *At Ephratah.* There is no thoroughly satisfactory explanation of this difficult verse. Perhaps the best is that the various reports about the ark reached Ephratah (Bethlehem), where David's youth was spent, and that when at last he was able to carry out his

long-cherished wish of bringing it to Zion, he found it at Kirjath-jearim, "the city of the woods."

10. *Turn not away.* "Refuse not the prayer," "deny me not," as in 1 Kings ii. 16. The verses 8-10 are taken nearly verbatim from Solomon's prayer in 2 Chron. vi. 41, 42. They prove that the Psalm is later than David's time, and the word "anointed" shows that it dates before the Captivity, as after that event there was in reality no "anointed" one.

11. *The Lord hath sworn.* Cp. 2 Sam. vii. 11-16; Acts ii. 30.

17. *The horn.* Emblem of power. *A lamp.* Emblem of prosperity. Cp. 1 Kings xi. 36.

PSALM CXXXIII.

Composed perhaps originally by David at the sight of some beautiful examples of family love and affection, this Psalm became to the exiles and the pilgrims a song of sweetness, exhorting them to national unity.

2. *The precious ointment.* Or rather "oil." Cp. Exod. xxx. 23-33; Lev. viii. 12, 30. The fragrance of the oil, to the composition of which many ingredients went, aptly pictures forth brotherly love.

3. *The dew of Hermon.* The moisture from the melting snows of Hermon descends upon the lower hills of Judæa, even as the oil flowed down from the head to the beard, etc. How ought this Psalm to speak to Christians!

PSALM CXXXIV.

The last of the pilgrim "songs of the up-goings." It forms a kind of final blessing to these songs.

1, 2. The words added in P. B. V., "even in the

courts," etc., are from the LXX. The Psalmist exhorts the priests, whose duty it is to keep the night-watch, to make their watch an opportunity for devotional exercise; and

3. The priests return answer by blessing the Psalmist.

PSALM CXXXV.

Historical occasion. The setting-up again probably after the Captivity of the Temple service. It is an exhortation to the Priests and Levites, resembling that of Ps. cxxxiv., and consisting in great degree of quotations from other Psalms and Books. See marg. ref.

Christian application. As the spiritual successors of Israel, Christians can take up this Psalm and sing it as their own.

4. *Peculiar treasure.* So Moses said, Exod. xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6, xiv. 2; and St. Peter transferred the title to Christians. See 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9.

21. *Out of Zion.* For from Zion has gone forth Jehovah's blessing in Christ Jesus to all the world.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXXVI.

Historical occasion. A post-exile Psalm of uncertain date, perhaps sung on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of the second Temple. But it would suit many events in the reviving life of the nation at that time. See Ezra iii. 11; Neh. xii. 40. This Psalm resembles much Ps. cxxxv. Both no doubt had the same author. The structure of the Psalm is unusual. The first line of each verse pursues the subject of the Psalm, while the second line is a kind of chorus, sung

by the whole choir in response to the single voice which sang the first part.

Christian application. As a retrospect of Israelite history, it is of value to the Christian, enabling him the better to trace in His dealings with the chosen people God's Hand preparing the Messiah's way.

1. *For His mercy, etc.* This chorus was appointed to be sung by David. See 1 Chron. xvi. 41 ; 2 Chron. vii. 3, xx. 21 ; Neh. xii. 46.

6. *Stretched out, etc.* Cp. Isa. xlii. 5, xliv. 24.

26. After this verse the P. B. V. adds a 27th verse, which does not occur in the Hebrew.

PSALM CXXXVII.

Historical occasion. Written either during the Captivity, or else by some one immediately after his return to Jerusalem. It is intensely patriotic.

Christian application. In a spiritual sense this Psalm may be taken as the expression of the Christian's joy in the sense of deliverance from the captivity of sin, and restoration in Jesus Christ.

2. *The willows.* The weeping willow. 4. Cp. Neh. ii. 2, 3.

7. *Rase it, etc.* Refers to the evil conduct of the Edomites when the Jews were carried captive. See Obadiah 1-16. The conduct of Edom, a kindred and once subject nation, sank deeply into the Jewish heart.

8. *To be destroyed.* The P. B. V. has "wasted with misery." Babylon had already been taken by Cyrus (B.C. 538), and the Psalmist now looks forward to its complete overthrow, which happened B.C. 516. Cp. Isa. xxi. 9. Babylon was to the prophets the symbol of opposition of evil to good. Isa. xiv.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

Historical occasion. This and the next seven Psalms have been called "The Israelite's manual of *private* prayer and praise."¹ They are all ascribed to David, and if not his, they breathe his spirit and devotion. The LXX., in doubt as to authorship, add the names of Haggai and Zechariah to David's.

Christian application. These personal Psalms are full of expressions which suit the spiritual circumstances of God's servants in all ages.

1. *Before the gods.* Most probably "the heathen deities." The LXX. however, and others, render "in the presence of the angels."

2. *Thy holy Temple.* The Tabernacle, if the Psalm is David's. Cp. Ps. v. 7, where see note; Josh. vi. 24; 2 Sam. xii. 20. See also 2 Sam. vii. 18.

Thy Word above all Thy Name. More correct than P. B. V., which is that of the LXX. The Psalmist seems to refer to the special word of promise given to David (2 Sam. vii.), which marks a "new era in Scripture prophecy," and which St. Peter tells us (Acts ii. 30) David understood of the Messiah. It was a revelation above all previous revelations.

5. *In the ways.* Of, or concerning the ways.

8. *Will perfect.* Cp. David's prayer, 2 Sam. vii. 25-29.

¹ Bishop Wordsworth.

LESSON XII.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXXXIX.

Historical occasion. Doubtful. The inscription assigns it to David, and its great beauty fully bears out the title. The so-called Aramaic forms found in it, and making it, as some think, of late date, may not improbably be simply dialectic variations, such as are common to all languages.

Christian application. There is no need of any special explanation. Every Christian heart can apply this Psalm.

2. *My downsitting.* Cp. Deut. vi. 7, and for verses 1-6 cp. Acts xvii. 28.

3. *Compassest.* Rather, searchest, winnowest.

7-12. Cp. Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.

9. *The sea.* The west. The rays of the morning sun shoot up from the east, and in a moment are shining in the west.

13. *Reins.* Kidneys, the seat of feeling, etc. with the Hebrew, as the *liver* with the Romans, and the *heart* with us.

13. *Covered me.* Thou didst weave me.

16. *All my members, etc.* Literally, "in Thy book were all these *things* (or *days*) written; days were formed, and there was not one of them." The meaning is, Thou sawest all the future, before even a single day had been made. Cp. Job x. 5-11.

18. *When I awake.* The Psalmist is so absorbed by his studies of God's attributes, that the moment he awakes his thoughts revert to his favourite theme.

19. Notice the abrupt transition from one subject to another.

24. *Wicked way.* Literally, "way of trouble, pain, or sorrow." Cp. Isa. xiv. 3.

PSALM CXL.

Historical occasion. Supposed by some to have been written when David was exposed to the malice of Saul and Doeg; others ascribe it and the next two Psalms to the evil persecuting times of Manasseh. It has several unusual words. All we can say is that from its style it may be David's.

Christian application. The Psalm may well be used as an appeal for God's help against our spiritual foes.

7. *Day of battle.* Literally, day of armour. Cp. 1 Sam. xvii. 45.

11. *An evil speaker.* P. B. V. is nearer Hebrew, "a man full of words," in the sense of the words being evil. Cp. ver. 3.

PSALM CXLI.

Historical occasion. Uncertain. Some assign it to the persecuting times of Manasseh, while others assign it with the inscription to David, and think it was written at the time of his flight from Absalom. It may be divided thus ;—1, 2. An evening prayer; 3, 4. Prayer for grace against temptation; 5-7. Excellence of a righteous man's reproof; 8-10. Renewed prayer against temptation, and the snares of the wicked.

Christian application. The Psalm may be used as a prayer against spiritual foes.

2. *Incense.* Symbolical of prayer. Rev. viii. 3, 4. The Psalmist alludes to the daily evening service of the Temple, from which, it would seem, he is excluded.

5-7. The meaning of these verses is obscure, chiefly because we know nothing of the circumstances under which the Psalm was written.

Excellent oil. The use of oil for anointing the body is a well-known custom in the East. Cp. Ps. xxiii. 5; Dan. x. 3. The Psalmist will bear cheerfully the rebukes of the righteous, and as for his enemies, his weapon against them shall always be prayer.

Their judges. Probably means that when the leaders of the enemies are overthrown, their followers will be ready to listen to words of reconciliation. Cp. events after deaths of Ahithophel and Absalom.

In stony places. They are hurled over the precipice on the rocks beneath. Cp. 2 Chron. xxv. 12.

Our bones. The allusion perhaps is to the staring appearance of the Psalmist and his friends from starvation; or it may be to some overthrow of the nation.

Cleaveth wood. Rather, "maketh furrows on the earth." Cp. Job xxxiii. 21.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXLII.

Historical occasion. Uncertain, although its style would bear out the inscription. The cave may have been either that of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii. 1) or of Engedi (1 Sam. xxiv. 3, 4). Cp. Ps. lvii. The Psalm may have been found after the Exile in some book now lost, and added to the Psalter. Some think it was

written by a later hand in imitation of David's manner and others assign it to the times of Manasseh.

Christian application. Most fittingly may the Christian use it in any time of deep spiritual distress. In the old Sarum P. B. it was appointed for Good Friday.

4. *I looked.* Rather, "Look on the right hand." The Psalmist beseeches God to see how, though in a crowd, he is despised and uncared for.

7. *Out of prison.* Figurative. Cp. Isa. xlii. 7, where the same word is used.

Compass me about. To show their joy at my deliverance. The words are rendered by some, "shall crown themselves" in token of their joy.

PSALM CXLIII.

Historical occasion. Assigned in its inscription to David, of whose earnest longings after God the Psalm is full. But its quotations from other Psalms makes it probable that it is a post-Exile Psalm, written by one who had made David's songs his great study.

Christian application. The Psalm is the last of the seven Penitential Psalms, and is appointed for Ash-Wednesday. The Church therefore teaches us that it is for the use of those who feel their sinfulness, and desire God's pardon and grace.

2. *Be justified.* Rather, "is righteous, (or just)." Cp. Job ix. 15, x. 15; Ps. xix. 9. "He is just whom God acquits."

3. *Long dead.* Cp. Lam. iii. 6.

8. *In the morning, i.e. soon, quickly.* Cp. Ps. xc. 14.

9. *To hide me.* Cp. Col. iii. 3.

10. *Thy Spirit is good.* Rather, "let Thy good Spirit lead me." See P. B. V.

THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM CXLIV.

Historical occasion. The first eleven verses are probably a composition from other Psalms of David's, especially Ps. xviii. Desiring to inspirit his nation by the thought of past glories, some later hand has prefixed these verses to a short Psalm (vv. 12-15) of his own, which is highly original, and breathes an earnest prayer for the renewed prosperity of the people.

Christian application. The Psalm represents the spiritual glories of our Divine Lord, Who with His voice pleads for His people. Heb. vii. 25.

6. *Scatter them, i.e. my enemies.* Ps. xviii. 9-14.

8. *Right hand of falsehood.* As having been lifted up in taking an oath, which was not kept. Cp. Gen. xiv. 22; Isa. lxii. 8.

10. *Unto kings.* The royal family of David.

12. *As plants—as corner-stones.* The vigour and activity of the youth are represented, and the beauty and home life of the maidens.

Of a palace. Perhaps "The temple," as P. B. V.

13. *Streets.* Rather, pastures, fields.

14. *Streets.* A different word, meaning the squares or open spaces in a city, where men congregate. Cp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 6; Neh. viii. 1.

PSALM CXLV. (An Alphabetical Psalm.)

Historical occasion. Quite uncertain. There can be little doubt but that the Psalm is later than David's time. It is a fine ode, celebrating God's care for all.

It alone of all the Psalms is called a Tehillah, a word meaning Praise. The Book of Psalms is called Tehillim, or Praises.

Christian application. It is a proper Psalm for Whit Sunday, and most fitly chosen for that great Festival on which God gave to His Church "diversities of gifts," but all through the same Spirit.

13. *An everlasting kingdom.* Literally, "a kingdom of all ages."

14. *All that fall.* Literally, "all the falling ones." Cp. Ps. xxxvii. 24.

21. *Let all flesh.* Upon whom God pours out of His Spirit. See Joel ii. 28.

PSALM CXLVI.

Historical occasion. This and the remaining four Psalms are without inscription. They are all Hallelujah Psalms, and are doubtless post-Exile. The LXX. ascribes this Psalm and the next two to Haggai and Zechariah, representing what is probably a true tradition.

Christian application. These five Psalms all seem to anticipate the great Hallelujahs of Rev. xix. 1-7. In this Psalm (cxlvi.) we have a prophecy in a spiritual sense of our Lord's work. Luke iv. 18, 19.

1. *Praise the Lord, i.e. Hallelujah.*

3. *In princes.* Such as Cyrus. It was the Lord Who stirred up his spirit. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22; Ezra i. 1.

7. *Looseth the prisoners.* Alluding to the release of the captives in Babylon.

9. *The strangers—fatherless—widow.* The most defenceless persons. Cp. Ps. lxxviii. 5. See our Lord's promise, "I will not leave you comfortless" (literally, orphans), and its fulfilment. John xiv. 18; Acts ii. 1, 2.

THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM CXLVII.

Historical occasion. Probably the Festival of the Dedication of the Walls, and complete restoration of Jerusalem under Nehemiah (Neh. xii. 27). The Psalmist invites his nation to praise God for His great mercies to Zion.

Christian application. The Christian uses the Psalm as representing the building up of Christ's Church, the Spiritual Zion.

2. *The outcasts of Israel.* So Isa. xi. 12, lvi. 8, of the children of the Captivity. Cp. James i. 1.

4. *He telleth the number.* Cp. Isa. xl. 26. With this and the succeeding verses cp. Job xxxviii., xxxix.

8. *Upon the mountains.* The P. B. V., following LXX., add "and herb for the use of men," which is not in the Hebrew.

13. *The bars of thy gates.* Alludes to Neh. vii. 1-4.

14. *Finest of the wheat.* Literally, "fat of the wheat." Cp. Ps. lxxxii. 16. The blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxii. 14) is renewed.

PSALM CXLVIII.

Historical occasion. Doubtless the outburst of national joy following on the restoration of Jerusalem. The Psalmist calls upon all creation, both of heaven (1-6) and earth (7-14), to join in one grand hymn of praise.

Christian application. The Christian, in using this Psalm, looks onward to the time when that whole

creation which "now groaneth and travaileth in pain together" will be redeemed from its bondage, and able to praise God.

4. *Waters above the heavens.* Perhaps the clouds. Cp. Gen. i. 6, 7.

6. *Shall not pass, i.e.* shall not be broken; or, rather, "they shall not transgress it."

7. *Dragons.* "Sea-monsters," as in Gen. i. 21. See Manual I. p. 9.

11. *Kings of the earth.* Cp. Mal. i. 11.

12. *Young men, etc.* For the general call to praise Jehovah, cp. Neh. xii. 43.

14. Cp. Ps. lxxv. 5.

PSALM CXLIX.

Historical occasion. See on preceding Psalm. It would almost seem as if the Jews, in their reawakened enthusiasm, looked forward to future conquests.

Christian application. Only as a song of final victory over the enemies of the truth may the Christian use this Psalm. No Christian may use it of personal enemies.

4. *Beautify.* Or, make glorious. Cp. Isa. lv. 5, lx. 7, 9, lxi. 3.

5. *Their beds.* In comfort and rest, not in war, tumult, or captivity. Cp. Hosea vii. 14.

6. *A two-edged sword,*—which in the hands of the Christian is God's Word. See Heb. iv. 12, and cp. Rev. i. 16. We may compare with this verse Neh. iv. 17 and 2 Macc. xv. 27.

8. *To bind.* Cp. account of Joseph in Ps. cv. 22. For the spiritual side, cp. Isa. xlix. 7, 23; Ps. ii. 3, 9.

9. *The judgment written—this honour.* Just as the Israelites were commissioned by God to execute His judgment upon the Canaanites, so the saints of God are permitted to be His instruments in overcoming the spiritual enemies of the truth.

PSALM CL.

Historical occasion. The service of the Second Temple. It is a very grand close to the whole Psalter.

Christian application. The Christian here, as the Hebrew, is exhorted to praise God with every faculty he possesses—his whole body, soul and spirit.

1. *His sanctuary.* Both heavenly and earthly.

6. *Let everything that hath breath.* All living creation, as opposed to mere instruments. Gen. ii. 7. With this heart-stirring call to praise and adore the Great Creator the Book of Praises closes.

APPENDIX.

ON THE LITURGICAL AND MUSICAL DIRECTIONS IN THE PSALMS.

1. *To the chief musician.*¹ Or, as we should say, "the precentor," whose duty it was either to set the Psalm to music, or to teach it to his choir. The names of three of David's precentors are preserved.²

Words describing the character of the Psalm.

2. *Maschil.*³ Either (1) a skilfully-composed hymn, or (2) one intended for instruction.

3. *Michtam.*⁴ Meaning very doubtful. Perhaps a favourite Psalm of the author, or one of "golden" or deep-meaning.

4. *Mizmor: a Psalm.*⁵ One to be sung *with* accompaniment.

5. *Shiggaion.*⁶ A poem written either on the spur of the moment, or in a wild irregular fashion.

6. *Shir: a song.*⁷ More general word than Mizmor. Probably a hymn which might be sung with or without accompaniment.

7. *Tephillah: a prayer.*⁸ Cp. Hab. iii. 1.

8. *A song of degrees.*⁹ See on Psalm cxx. page 102.

9. *To bring to remembrance.*¹⁰ Either (1) to recall before God the sufferings and sorrow of David, or possibly (2) to remind men of the glory and majesty of God.

¹ Ps. iv. and fifty-four others.

³ Ps. xxxii. and twelve others.

⁵ Ps. iii. and many others.

⁷ Ps. xviii. and many others.

⁹ Ps. cxx-cxxxiv.

² 1 Chron. vi. 33, 39, 44; xxv. 1.

⁴ Ps. xvi., lvi.-lx.

⁶ Ps. vii. Cp. Hab. iii. 1.

⁸ Ps. xvii., lxxxvi., xc., cii., cxlii.

¹⁰ Ps. xxxviii., lxx. Cp. 1 Chron. xvi. 4, "record."

Words relating to the tune or instruments to which the Psalm was to be sung.

10. *Upon Aijeleth-Shahar*.¹ Literally, "upon the hind of the morning." The Psalm was to be sung to the tune of that name, or of a poem commencing with those words.

11. *Upon Alamoeth*.² Literally, "after the manner of maidens," i.e., most probably with treble or soprano voices.

12. *Al-taschith*.³ Literally, "destroy not." Probably the name of the tune, with a reference to David's circumstances at the time. See 1 Sam. xxvi. 9.

13. *Upon Gittith*.⁴ The Psalm was to be sung either (1) to the music of an instrument imported from the Philistine city of Gath, or (2) to some particular tune adapted from a Philistine measure.

14. *Upon Jonath-elem-rechokim*.⁵ Literally, "the dove of silence in distant lands." See note on No. 12.

15. *Upon Mahalath*.⁶ Either (1) some kind of stringed instrument, or (2) a melancholy chant or tune to which the Psalm was to be sung.

16. *Upon Mahalath Leannoeth*.⁷ The latter word means probably "for correction," or "humbling." The Psalm, in accordance with its character, was to be sung to some sad strain.

17. *Upon Muth-labben*.⁸ Literally, "upon the death of the son." The meaning is very obscure. Probably the name of a tune or hymn. It may however

¹ Ps. xxii.

³ Ps. lvii-lix., lxxv.

⁵ Ps. lvi.

⁷ Ps. lxxxviii.

² Ps. xlvi. Cp. 1 Chron. xv. 20, 21.

⁴ Ps. viii., lxxxi., lxxxiv.

⁶ Ps. liii.

⁸ Ps. ix.

be a fragment of a longer title, now lost, which read, "Upon Alamoth. For the sons of Korah."

18. *On Neginoth*;¹ singular, *Neginah*.² Stringed instruments of various kinds, upon one or other of which the music accompanying the Psalm was to be played.

19. *Upon Nehiloth*.³ Most likely various perforated instruments, such as flutes, pipes, etc.

20. *Upon Sheminith*.⁴ Literally, "upon the eighth." Cp. 1 Chron. xv. 21. The meaning seems to be that the Psalm was to be sung by deep-sounding, bass voices.

21. *Upon Shoshannim*.⁵ Lilies. *Shushan-eduth*.⁶ Lily of the Testimony. *Shoshannim-eduth*.⁷ Lilies of the Testimony. Either a tune of the name, or an instrument shaped like a lily, the music of which accompanied the Psalm.

Musical Signs.

22. *Higgaion*.⁸ A musical sign or note directing apparently an interlude of instrumental music.

23. *Selah*.⁹ Occurs seventy-one times in the Psalms, and thrice in Habakkuk. A word of very uncertain meaning. It is certainly some kind of musical direction, denoting, perhaps, some pause in the singing, or the place for a short interlude of instrumental music.

¹ Ps. iv. and five others.

² Ps. lxi.

³ Ps. v.

⁴ Ps. vi., xii.

⁵ Ps. xlv., lxix.

⁶ Ps. lx.

⁷ Ps. lxxx. Cp. 1 Kings vii. 19, 22, 26.

⁸ Ps. ix. 16; Ps. xix. 14 (meditation); Ps. xcii. 3 (with a solemn sound).

⁹ Ps. iii. and thirty-eight others; Hab. iii. 3, 9, 13.



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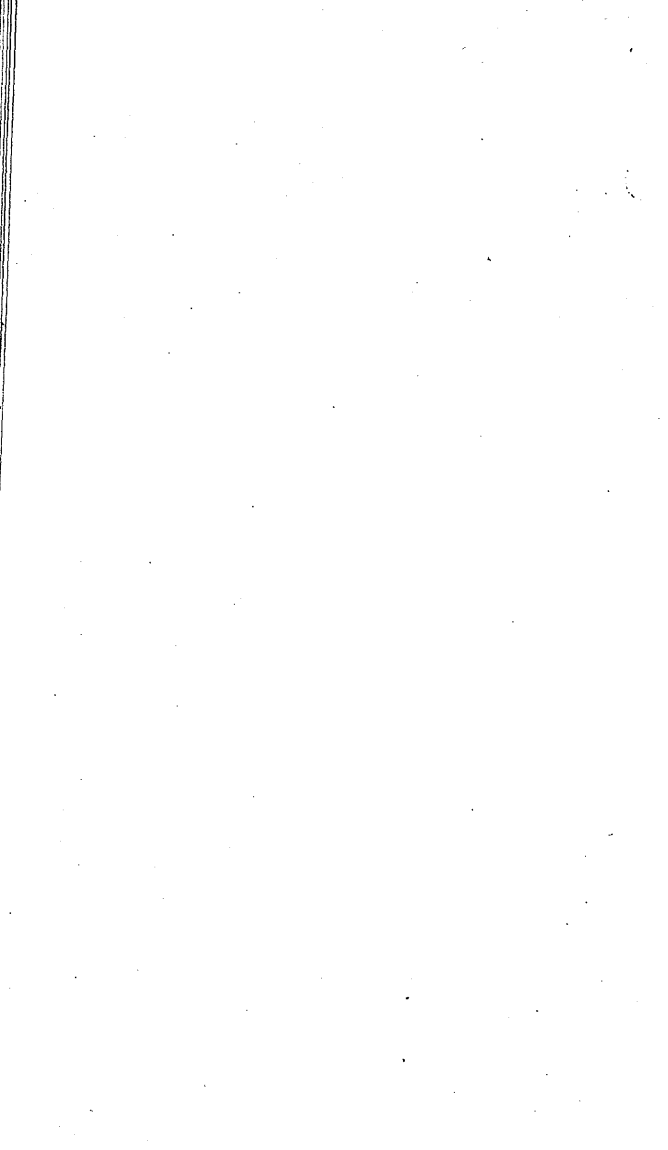
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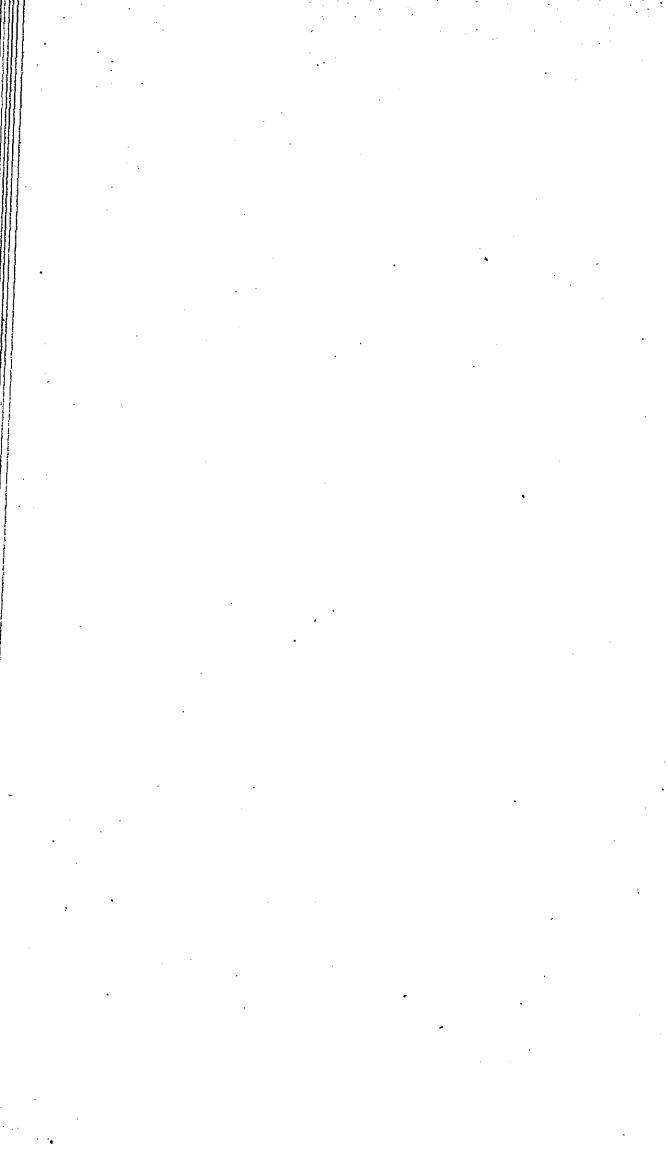


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Fifth Year's Course.

LESSON I.

THE PROPHETS OF THE CAPTIVITY— EZEKIEL.

Read Ezekiel, chapters i. 1-3, ii—viii., xi—xv., xvii—xxii., xxiv.,
xxxiii., xxxiv., xxxvi., xxxvii.

WE have seen, in the Third Part of this Manual, how the great judgment, foretold by ISAIAH, was suspended during the days of the good Josiah; but fell on his degenerate successor, Jehoiakim, who, in spite of JEREMIAH'S warnings, persisted in relying on the false alliance of Egypt, and so brought upon himself the crushing vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar.

We are to see, in the present part of the Manual, how in the evil days that followed, God "left not Himself without witness;" speaking to His people, even in the land of their exile, by His servants the prophets, and chiefly by the mouth of Ezekiel and Daniel. We will begin with EZEKIEL.

When Jeremiah saw the vision of two baskets of figs set before the Temple of the Lord,¹ one evil and one good, it was explained by God to mean the two divisions into which Judah was then broken; the captives taken, with the young king Jehoiachin,

¹ Jer. xxiv.

into Babylon, were the good, the remainder of the people left at Jerusalem were the evil figs.

The promises to the captives were very full and distinct ; God would acknowledge them and look on them for good, they should eventually be brought again to their own land,—yet more, they should have a heart given to them to know the Lord, and should return to Him. The period of seventy years was also foretold as the length of the Captivity.¹

The exiles were cheered by a full knowledge of these promises, for the Prophet Jeremiah wrote them in a letter to them, and sent it from Jerusalem to Babylon. He gave them also some rules for their life while in exile. They were to sustain their interest in life, and not to live in despondency, to make marriages, to build houses and plant gardens, to seek the peace of the city to which they were brought, and to pray for it.² These words give us some idea of the manner of life of the people during the Captivity. It was by no means a second Egyptian bondage. The Jews in Babylon were not slaves, brought from their own country, and forced to obey a foreign ruler, but rather exiles. Districts of the country were made over to them ; they had their own houses and could acquire property, and they still recognized the elders of their own nation. If we except some instances of oppression, the conduct of the king and people of Babylon was not severe towards them ; they themselves affirmed that God had “made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.”³

But to the Israelites the trials and the sufferings of captivity were very great. It has been remarked that it

¹ Jer. xxv. 11, 12.

² Jer. xxix. 1-14.

³ Ps. cvi. 46.

is always a misfortune to a people to be robbed of its national independence, but that this misfortune fell with far greater force on the Israelites than on any other people. Palestine was not only their fatherland, but a holy land to them ; exile from it meant banishment from the Temple, from the appointed feasts and from all the other outward ordinances of their religion. The belief in One unseen God separated them from other nations ; they had, it is true, often fallen into idolatry in their past history, but in the Captivity the better part of the nation had been carried away, and these clung with fervour to the purer faith. It was impossible for them to worship at the many shrines the ruins of which can still be traced in Babylon—great artificial hills, which broke the monotony of that flat country, with painted stages designed for the worship of the heavenly bodies. They could only sit by the side of the Babylonish rivers, and with harps hung on the willow trees, weep and lament for Zion, and desire that the tongue that sang or the hand that played in a strange land might lose its power to sing or play.¹ It was a time of trial, a time of purifying ; they clung to the promises announced by Jeremiah ; and by two evident signs God declared to them that He was indeed looking on them for good. These two signs were the continuance of the power of inspired psalmody, and the raising up of prophets among them. Those who have studied the Psalms deeply, differ as to the number which should be referred to this period, but some expressions in them appear to belong necessarily to the Babylonish captives. “ Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto

¹ Ps. cxxxvii.

Thy Holy Name, and to triumph in Thy praise.”¹ So prayed the exiles, feeling deeply their loss of all the outward ordinances of their religion.

It was, however, in the gift of prophecy that they had the strongest assurance of God’s continued recognition of them as His people. Not only by letters from Jeremiah, or words of other prophets treasured in the memory, were the hearts of the exiles cheered. In the land of their captivity one among themselves was specially chosen to be a messenger from God to them, a true prophet of the Lord.

Ezekiel was carried from his native land at the time when Nebuchadnezzar took the king Jehoiachin and the chief men of Judæa away, shortly after the death of Jehoiakim. Among the priests then taken to Babylon Ezekiel was one, and he very probably exercised some priestly functions in the land of exile, though he was never again to serve God in his office in the Temple. He lived at Tel-Abib, or “the Mound of Wheat-Ears,” in the midst of a colony of his countrymen which was settled there by the side of the river Chebar, probably a great canal made by Nebuchadnezzar.² Isaiah received his call to be a prophet in the Temple itself; Jeremiah, at his home in Anathoth; to Ezekiel the call came “by the waters of Babylon,” when he had been five years a captive. Walking by the river Chebar, he saw a glorious vision, and heard the voice of God, and at that vision fell prostrate on the ground.³ His charge was given him to speak God’s words to all the house of Israel, and especially to those who were with him in captivity. It was to be nothing to him whether his words were heeded or not;

¹ Ps. cvi. 47.

² Ezek. iii. 15.

³ Ezek. i. 3-28.

he was to uplift his voice amid all discouragement, and God was to make his face strong against their faces, his forehead "as an adamant harder than flint."¹ "In bitterness of spirit, in the heat of his spirit," he returned to his own home and sat among his people, "astonished" and overpowered by the revelation, for seven days. At the end of that time the voice came again, proclaiming him to be the watchman to the house of Israel, and announcing the terrible responsibility, that the blood of those who died in iniquity unwarned by him should be required at his hand.

For the next twenty-two years Ezekiel received continual intimations from God, sometimes in the form of visions, sometimes in direct messages. These were delivered by him with unflinching boldness. Many of his words related to Jerusalem and the remnant of the nation left still in Judæa, and to seven heathen nations he denounced God's judgments; but the main part of his teaching and his warnings related to the exiles by whom he was surrounded.

Among these he was apparently treated with honour. The elders among them came often to his house, and sat before him to listen to his words, and to inquire of the Lord by him. This outward deference, however gave no comfort to the soul of the prophet. These very elders, he was told, had "set up their idols in their heart," and according to those idols should they be answered. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you."² With the people it was a pleasure and a fashion to listen to the eloquent words of the prophet; constantly they discussed them among themselves, and proposed to each other to go and

¹ Ezek. iii. 8, 9.

² Ezek. xiv. 3, xx. 3.

hear them ; but it was to them only like hearing “ a very lovely song ” from a musician ; they heard and did them not ; and when he sought to impress the deep meaning of his message on them, he complained in the bitterness of his heart that they said of him, “ Doth he not speak parables ? ”—riddles, enigmas, dark sayings, the meaning of which they cared not to unravel.¹

In his own person Ezekiel enacted as in a parable many of God’s messages. He sighed with bitterness before their eyes, he suffered some of the miseries of the siege ; he cried out with terror at the fearful vision of destruction revealed to him, all of which he repeated again to them of the Captivity.² He shrank from none of these things in the fulfilment of his mission. Once only his feelings as a priest recoil with horror from the ceremonial pollution demanded of him.³ And once, as has been said, “ the feelings of the man burst in one single expression through the self-devotion of the prophet ; ” and he relates the death of his wife in the pathetic words, “ The desire of his eyes was taken from him.”⁴ At God’s command, however, he forebore to make any sign of mourning ; constant and unchanging, he, whose forehead was made “ as an adamant harder than flint,” was content even in his sorrow to be made a sign to his people. Unweariedly he taught them. They murmured against the second commandment, exclaiming that they were made to suffer for the idolatry of their fathers ; and he showed them that the suffering inherited by children from parents can be but temporal, that it does not affect their moral state.

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 30-33.

³ Ezek. iv. 14.

² Ezek. xxi. 6, 7, iv., xii. 1-7, ix. 8, xi. 25.

⁴ Ezek. xxiv. 15-18.

There each one chooses for himself, and only "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." In the clear, calm judgment which was granted to him, Ezekiel perceived the spiritual meaning of God's law, and showed its application to human nature in all times and places, and not merely as intended for the guidance of the chosen people dwelling in the Holy Land. False prophets and prophetesses, however, "made the heart of the righteous sad, whom God had not made sad," and spoke against Ezekiel, prophesying peace when there was no peace.¹ These seem to have been numerous in the land of the Captivity; and two of them, Zedekiah and Ahab, are mentioned by Jeremiah as being especially wicked in their lives, and at length burnt to death by Nebuchadnezzar.² These false prophets continually affirmed that Jerusalem would not be taken by the king of Babylon, but at length the truth of Ezekiel's words about it was made known. Rather more than a year after the taking of Jerusalem, a fugitive from the city brought the news to the captives by the river Chebar. "The city is smitten."³ After this signal confirmation of his words, Ezekiel seems for a time to have ceased to prophesy, but he continued to guide and teach the people. One among his own countrymen must have certainly inspired him with hope. In the young Daniel, then growing up at the court of Babylon, he saw a bright instance of piety and wisdom, and he alludes to these characteristics as already well and publicly known.⁴

The later visions also of the first great prophet of the Captivity were of a more consoling and hopeful charac-

¹ Ezek. xiii. 22, 16.

² Jer. xxix. 21-23.

³ Ezek. xxxiii. 21.

⁴ Ezek. xiv. 14, xxviii. 3.

ter, though so deep in meaning, so obscure and mystic, that they are not yet fully understood; yet in the words "O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel,"¹ we see a suggestion of immortality. And in the last glorious vision of the Temple of God and the water of life, we are reminded of another, who, exiled for the faith to the lonely isle of Patmos, looked beyond the wild rocks and vast sea by which he was surrounded to an eternal and limitless abode. To the eye of Ezekiel the holy waters appeared to issue from the House of God, and he was told that "Everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live;" the fruit of the trees by its side "shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." The same vision is vouchsafed to St. John. "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of the river was there the tree of life, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."²

¹ Ezek. xxxvii. 12.

² Ezek. xlvii. 9, 12; Rev. xxii. 1, 2.

LESSON II.

THE PROPHETS OF THE CAPTIVITY— DANIEL.

Read Daniel, chapters i—vi. and ix.

THE letters of Jeremiah and the oral teaching of Ezekiel had been the main channels of Divine instruction and guidance to the Israelites of the Captivity. As they read and mused over the one, or thronged the prophet's house to listen to the other,¹ the remembrance of a glorious past, the hope for the future, the right conduct to pursue in the present, were all kept alive in their minds. But as during the Egyptian captivity one Israelite was to be brought up at the court of Pharaoh, and instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, so in this second Captivity one of the enslaved race was to be placed high in office, near the throne, and to learn all that the wisdom of the Chaldæans could teach him.

Jehoiakim had reigned three years in Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar, making a raid into Judæa, was bought off by the surrender of some of the vessels of the Temple, and certain children of the royal house, who were then looked on probably as hostages. The after revolts of the kings Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, and the final overthrow of the Jewish nation, rendered their captivity perpetual. Among these children were

¹ Dan. ix. 2 ; Ezek. xxxiii. 30, 31.

Daniel and his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These youths were specially distinguished for beauty and intelligence, but it is evident that Daniel was from the first the leading spirit among them. Even thus early in life the first chapter of the Book of Daniel gives us an account of his holy resolution not to be "mingled among the heathen;" and he probably was very young when mentioned by Ezekiel as an instance of "wisdom and holiness."¹ His education was the best that Babylon could give, and that was a far more extended one than he could have acquired at Jerusalem. He was taught "the learning and the tongue of the *Chaldæans*." This word "*Chaldæan*" was originally applied to a particular tribe inhabiting the southern portion of Babylonia. It afterwards came to be given to the whole country and people of Babylon. In this sense it is often used in the Bible.² But there is yet a third sense in which we meet with it. The old southern dialect of the original *Chaldæans* was retained as a learned language, in which were written all books on the sciences then understood, while the people of Babylon commonly spoke in the time of Daniel an entirely different language. Those therefore who studied literature and the old tongue in which it was written, came to be called "*Chaldæans*,"—a class of learned people; and in this sense the word is used in the Book of Daniel. The science for which the *Chaldæans* were most famed was astronomy, for the study of which the clear atmosphere of their country and the high towers of their temples gave them peculiar facilities. In this learning, in which these *Chaldæans* had made great progress,

¹ Ezek. xiv. 14; xxviii. 3.

² 2 Kings xxv.

Daniel was trained, and he and his companions were early placed in high office "before the king."¹

This king was Nebuchadnezzar, the foremost man in all the world at that period. His father Nabopolassar had successfully rebelled against the last king of Assyria, and in the overthrow of Assyria had gained most of the country which had belonged to it, and joined it to his newly-formed Empire of Babylon. Thus Babylon, once a tributary of Assyria, became the mistress of the world.² For only eighty-eight years did the kingdom of Babylon continue; and for half of that time its throne was occupied by Nebuchadnezzar. Even before the death of his father he was the successful military leader of his nation; and after his accession Judæa, Tyre and Egypt were in turn conquered by him. But his public works and his arts of peace were even greater than his warlike achievements. He had literally made "the Golden City;" for though there existed a Babylon before his time, yet the chief buildings and the great public works which made her the wonder of the world were constructed by him. He built, or at least repaired, the great wall which surrounded the city and the adjoining country, enclosing a space of many miles. The wall had 250 towers and 25 brazen gates, and was wide enough for a chariot with four horses to turn on it. To the same king are due the building of a magnificent palace, and of the great temples, the making of curious "hanging gardens" (gardens raised on high mounds of earth supported by masonry) to please the taste of his queen, and the construction of a variety of ingenious and useful canals and reservoirs for water.

¹ Dan. i. 19.

² Isa. xlvii. 5; Jer. l. 23.

The wonder of these works is increased when we remember that Babylonia was a country destitute of stone, and almost so of wood, and that all its buildings were constructed of bricks made of baked clay, and often painted and enamelled. The immense command of forced labour which Nebuchadnezzar possessed, from the many people whom he had led captive, could alone have enabled him to carry out these works in the space of forty-four years ; but the force and genius of the man who could do so, with even this power at his command, must have been very great. All the ruins now left of Babylon testify to his greatness ; they are little more than mounds or heaps of earth and bricks ; and on the bricks almost everywhere is inscribed the name of Nebuchadnezzar. We can scarcely wonder that, as he walked on the roof of the gorgeous palace he had made, and surveyed all round him the evidences of his genius and power, he should be tempted to exclaim, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

Before this man, fierce, hasty, and cruel, yet not without generous and noble impulses, Daniel was brought, "to declare the king's dream¹ and its interpretation." His prayers and those of his companions had been heard ; and before he entered the king's presence he had already thanked God Who had made known to him the mighty mystery, a mystery which involved a great part of the world's history. The different parts of the great

¹ Whether Nebuchadnezzar had really forgotten the dream is doubtful. The words "the thing is gone from me," not improbably mean "I have made this decree." The king wanted to test his wise men. If they could tell the dream, they could also interpret it.

image seen by the king are explained to mean four different empires, clearly those successively of Babylon, Persia, Greece (under Alexander), and Rome; all these to be succeeded by the Kingdom of Christ, "a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed," a stone "cut out of the mountain without hands" (that is, not by human strength), which should break in pieces all that had gone before. The immediate result of this interpretation was the elevation of Daniel to the highest offices of the kingdom, and the acknowledgment by the king that his God was "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings."

This recognition did not, however, prevent the king from erecting the golden image, which was probably designed to represent Merodach or (Bel-Merodach), the god of Nebuchadnezzar's greatest reverence.¹ From the persecution undergone by his steadfast companions, Daniel was saved either by his high office, or by his absence from Babylon at the time. He was there, however, when the king, "at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace," was again troubled with a vision from God. Some affection for the king is shown by Daniel's astonishment and trouble "for one hour," as the meaning of the vision became clear to him, and by his prayer that Nebuchadnezzar would repent, and especially show mercy to the poor,—doubtless the down-trodden captives employed on his great works. The counsel by which, unlike the spirit shown by Jonah, Daniel would have averted the punishment foretold by himself was not followed. A year more, and the king was afflicted by a terrible disease, known to physicians as lycanthropy. "It consists in the

¹ Jer. l. 2; Dan. iv. 8.

belief that one is not a man but a beast, in the disuse of language, the rejection of all ordinary human food, and sometimes in the loss of the erect posture and a preference for walking on all fours."¹ Probably for seven² years Nebuchadnezzar was afflicted in this manner, and confined to the private gardens of the palace, while his queen ruled the kingdom in his place. At the end of the allotted time his intellect returned to him again; and his thanksgiving to God, his acknowledgment of His power, and his willingness to show the signs God had wrought in him, finely illustrate the best side of his character. He was now an old man, and seems to have died not very long after his recovery, at the age of nearly eighty, having reigned forty-four years.

He was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach, who reigned but for two years, but during that time released Jehoiachin, king of Judah, from the prison where Nebuchadnezzar had kept him for thirty-five years, and treated him kindly.³

Evil-Merodach was killed in a conspiracy made against him. Two other kings mounted the throne; but after four years another change raised to the throne a Babylonian named Nabonadius, called Labynetus by the Greeks.

Nabonadius seems to have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar's, by whom he had a son, named Belshazzar, who was early in life associated with

¹ Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*.

² The term "seven times" (Dan. iv. 16, 23) is obscure. It may mean three and a half years, each summer and each winter being a "time." The inscriptions indicate a suspension of Nebuchadnezzar's great works for a period of about four years.

³ 2 Kings xxv. 27-30.

his father in the kingdom. These changes of government affected the position of Daniel. He was no longer "ruler over the whole province of Babylon," but still was employed in state affairs. We find him, in the third year of Belshazzar, at Shushan, or Susa, in Elam, a province at this time belonging to Babylon. There, faithful still, he did the king's business,¹ there visions were vouchsafed to him, and angels made them clear to him.²

The invasion of Babylonia by Cyrus may have caused Daniel's return to the city of Babylon. For a time the Persian army lay at some distance from it; but after defeating the elder king Nabonadius (who fled to a neighbouring city called Borsippa), Cyrus advanced and besieged the young king Belshazzar in Babylon. The renowned city walls, however, proved too strong for him; and marching away from their immediate neighbourhood, he proceeded to dig a channel which should draw off the waters of the river Euphrates, which ran through the city, and thus open a passage for his troops. Still this plan could not have succeeded had the Babylonians kept watch and closed the river gates. But Cyrus waited till the time of a great festival, when the whole city was given up to revelry and amusement. Madly trusting to their strong walls, they left them unwatched and unguarded. Within the palace the boy-king held his banquet, offering libations to the false gods of Babylon, while he drank from the sacred vessels of the Jewish Temple. In the midst of the feast appeared the handwriting on the wall, words which none could read, striking terror to the heart of the king and his court. In his distress

¹ Dan. viii. 2, 27.

² Dan. viii. 15-19.

the queen-mother came to him. She is distinguished from the "wives" of Belshazzar,¹ and was evidently his mother, herself the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. It is he of whom she speaks as "thy father," there being but one word for father and grandfather in either Chaldee and Hebrew. She recalls to him Nebuchadnezzar's former minister Daniel, who must then have been an old man. He alone could read the words of doom; and at once, in the presence of his court, Belshazzar proclaimed him "third ruler in the kingdom," that is, next after himself and his father, the two joint-kings. Belshazzar's power to raise or to put down was, however, at an end. That night, even in the palace where he was feasting, the young king was slain. The Persians had entered the city by the bed of the river, and before the morning Cyrus their leader was the master of it. The great prophecy of Jeremiah against Babylon began to be fulfilled. "The mighty men of Babylon had forborne to fight, the broad walls of Babylon were utterly broken, and her high gates burned with fire," while hurried messengers escaped away "to show the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end."²

Thus Babylon fell into the power of the united peoples—the Medes and Persians. Cyrus, her conqueror, had other conquests to pursue, and therefore made Darius the Mede king over Babylon. We are expressly told that "Darius the Median *took*," or received, "the kingdom," and that he was "*made king* over the realm of the Chaldæans."³ He was already past sixty years of age, and his reign did not last long.

¹ Dan. v. 10, 2, 3.

² Jer. li. 30, 58, 31.

³ Dan. v. 31; ix. 1.

During it, the envy of the princes caused Daniel, who had again become the chief minister of the king, to be cast into a den of lions. This "den" was probably a kind of pit such as is used by Eastern kings to confine wild beasts; it had a stone which covered the "mouth or entrance, but was otherwise open to the air, so that the king could converse with Daniel before the stone was removed.

Daniel was now an old man; his habit of constant prayer, his pious recognition of God, was the same as in his early life. He had prayed *then* to God to make known to him the king's dream; *now*, in the time of Darius, he prayed three times a day, looking towards that holy city, which he had left as a child, and was never to revisit. As a child he had refused to defile himself with the royal dainties, as an old man he fasted sometimes for three weeks at a time.¹ To prayer and fasting he joined meditation on the Word of God. Some expressions used by him seem taken from Ezekiel, who was the prophet of the Captivity during his youth; in these last days of his life we find him studying the Book of Jeremiah, yearning for the end of "the desolations of Jerusalem,"² and praying for pardon and restoration in words which show how clear was his spiritual insight. He lived to see that restoration. Too old to accompany his brethren in their return, he was yet alive in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, who in his first year issued the decree for the return of the Jews to their native land.³

To the "man greatly beloved,"⁴ however, a higher reward was vouchsafed. As he grew older it was not

¹ Cp. Dan. i. 8, 12, ix. 3; x. 2, 3.

² Dan. ix. 2.

³ Dan. x. 1; Ezra i. 1-4.

⁴ Dan. x. 11, 19.

the dreams of heathen kings, but the destinies of many nations, and the coming of the Messiah, which were unfolded in vision to him. Angels sent from heaven strengthened him, and at the last a promise of a more enduring rest than the earthly Canaan could give was made. "Go thou thy way till the end be : for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."¹

¹ Dan. xii. 13.

LESSON III.

THE PROPHETS AFTER THE RETURN FROM THE CAPTIVITY—HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH.

Read Ezra i., iii—vi. ; Haggai ; Zech. i—iv., vi. 9-15, vii., viii.

IT was probably but for a short time that Darius the Mede ruled over Babylon. The real conqueror, Cyrus, soon reigned in person ; and one of his first acts was to issue an edict for the restoration of the Jews to their native land. About 170 years before, Isaiah had prophesied of Cyrus, who was called the Lord's "Anointed," His "Shepherd," who should perform all His pleasure ; "Even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built ; and to the Temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."¹ The means by which God moved the resolution of Cyrus may have been partly political considerations ; but the chief agent probably was the aged prophet Daniel, of whose interpretation of the writing at Belshazzar's feast and deliverance from the lions' den he must have heard. Daniel may have showed the words of Isaiah to Cyrus, who in his proclamation says, "The Lord God of heaven . . . hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem."²

The seventy years foretold for the Captivity had passed away. A new generation had sprung up, and

¹ Isa. xlv. 1, xlv. 28.

² Ezra i. 2.

perhaps it should not surprise us to find that many of those born during that time had no desire to leave the land of their birth, and clung to their homes in Babylon. The more enthusiastic and the nobler spirits among them, however, hailed with joy the opportunity for return, and about 50,000 set forth on their way to Jerusalem. The greater number of these belonged to the tribes of Levi, Judah, and Benjamin, but many of other tribes accompanied them.¹ Some of these were aged men who had seen Jerusalem in their youth, and yearned to return; and there were also priests, Levites, singers, and porters for the Temple service.

The leader of the host was a prince of the house of David, named Zerubbabel. This name signifies "dispersed," or "begotten in Babylon." Like Daniel and his companions, he had received another name at the foreign court where he had lived, that of Sheshbazzar.² He was the representative of the line of David, the hope of the royal house, and recognized as Prince of the Captivity by the Jews. He was made by Cyrus governor of Judæa, which was to be not a separate kingdom, but a province of Persia. He proved himself a worthy leader. Though he knew the promises of everlasting kingship to his own line, he was loyal to Cyrus who had sent him; and his unfailing faith and steady devotion to God's service were rewarded by Divine assurances of favour. He was accompanied by the high priest Joshua, of whom all that we know indicates a singularly pure and noble character. During his high priesthood the perfect harmony existing between priests and prophets speaks well for his influence, which is in strong contrast to that of the high priest in

¹ Ezra i. 5; 1 Chron. ix. 3; Ezra ii. 70.

² Ezra i. 8, v. 14, 16.

Jeremiah's time.¹ Among the host were also Haggai and Zechariah, whose great mission it was first to speak with the burning words of prophecy after the return.

We can imagine the feelings of the returning exiles, the hopes of the young, the memories of the old who had seen the Holy City before, the joy of all. They were, as they themselves expressed it, "like them that dream;" and with laughter and singing they spoke of "the great things" the Lord had done for them, adding the prayer, that as in the spring the empty water-courses of the hot south country are filled again with water and become rivers, so might all the children of the Captivity return and flow together in their own land.²

But they did not find the land on their return such as their fathers had found it when, led by the first Joshua, they inherited the labour of the people.³ During the Captivity the land had lain desolate, and the returning Jews had to clear their fields of the jungle, to build their houses, and to protect themselves from enemies dwelling around. At first they began with alacrity the work of rebuilding the Temple with which they were charged. They had with them the sacred vessels which, carried off by Nebuchadnezzar and used by Belshazzar at his feast, had been restored by Cyrus. But there was no Temple in which to place them. The first act of the leaders was to raise up again the altar of burnt-offering. Probably in clearing the ruins of the Temple they found the old foundation of this altar, and "upon his bases" they set up the new one, before the Temple porch. Once more from this time the daily sacrifices were offered and all the appointed feasts

¹ Jer. xx. 1, 2.

² Ps. cxxvi.

³ Ps. cv. 44.

kept, the Feast of Tabernacles occurring a fortnight after the raising of the altar.

Assisted by the decree of Cyrus, they procured cedar-trees from Lebanon, as Solomon had previously done, to rebuild the Temple, and early in the next year their preparations were forward enough for them to lay the foundation of the House itself. This was done with all the solemnity and pomp they could command. Once more God's people stood on the hill of Zion, the priests with their trumpets, the sons of Asaph singing the very same words as their fathers had sung when Solomon dedicated the first Temple. But how changed was the scene ! Instead of the finished courts and beautiful house of the great king, they were surrounded by heaps of rubbish, deserted and ruinous streets, desolation everywhere. At the sight and the thoughts awakened, those who remembered the past glories burst into tears, while the young and hopeful shouted for joy. None can have felt these mingled emotions more than Zerubbabel. The heir of David and of Solomon, he stood at last near the sepulchres of his fathers, he saw the place where they had ruled, he was the successor to their work, for his own hands laid the foundation of the second Temple ;¹ yet he was but an officer appointed by a foreign king, at the head of a small and weak band of people, the "remnant" who had returned ; the promises to the line of David seemed far from fulfilment, the discouragements to the work before him were many and great.

The greatest hindrance was probably caused by the conduct of the heathen colonists living around the Jews. These "Samaritans" (whose name becomes

¹ Zech. iv. 9.

so familiar to us in the New Testament) were not Israelites, but were a mixed race of people sent to occupy the land more than a hundred years before by Esarhaddon, king of Assyria. They claimed to help in the building, but were rejected by Zerubbabel and the high priest on account of their foreign birth and heathen practices.¹ From this time they became active enemies; they sent messengers with false accusations against the Jews to the Persian court, and they probably intercepted the supplies of stone and timber for the building. Added to this, came the extreme difficulty of cultivating the land. Under these hindrances the faith of the Jews failed, and they gradually ceased to build the House whose foundation they had so quickly laid. Even the noble governor and the high priest became discouraged, and selfish desires crept in among the chief men. They made houses for themselves which were "cieled," that is, inlaid with cedar, for which they probably used the wood which had been brought for the Temple.² For this selfish neglect and want of faith God's punishment fell on them. A terrible drought came upon the land; sudden storms destroyed the labours of their hands; and it seemed in vain to work. They sowed much and brought in little. If they went to a heap of sheaves for corn or to the wine-press for wine, they found the yield less than they expected.³ Yet they did not perceive that it was really God's blessing, withheld from them because of their want of faith, that they needed. At length a decree from the Persian court forbade any further attempts at building.

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 29-41.

² Haggai i. 4, 8; Ezra iii. 7.

³ Haggai i. 6, 10, 11, ii. 15-17; Zech. viii. 10.

And now, at the darkest time, came a bright light. Once more prophetic voices were raised among God's people, and two servants of God, one of them by birth a priest, were empowered to deliver "the word of the Lord" to His people. The first of these was Haggai. On the occasion of the Feast of the New Moon (the first day of the sixth month) he spoke to the people assembled in the unfinished building. Respecting their own words that the time was not come to build, he urged on them that it *was* the time, for famine and drought were come on them because they had not done it, but had spent the time on their own dwellings.¹ "Consider your ways," or, "Set your heart upon your ways;" this is the constant call of the earnest practical prophet, and the call was not unheeded. Zerubbabel and Joshua were stirred up at once, and the people followed them, so that, after a suspension of about fourteen years, the work was resumed with vigour. Immediately came another message from the lips of Haggai, "I am with you, saith the Lord."²

It took four years to complete the Temple after this second attempt at building was made. For five months during the first of these years Haggai from time to time delivered messages from God. When the joyous Feast of Tabernacles came round (the twenty-first day of the seventh month³), he uttered strengthening words to the rulers and the people. They might remember the old Temple, and despair of ever equalling its glory and beauty, but he was commissioned to tell them that the glory of this second house should be far greater than that of the first, and that after they had seen the nations around them convulsed and shaken, in that place where

¹ Haggai i.² Haggai i. 13.³ Haggai ii. 1.

they were should peace be given. Peace, but only after the overthrow of thrones and kingdoms,—such an overthrow as Daniel had witnessed when he interpreted the king's dream at Babylon. The great empires of the heathen world should fall at length, and the kingdom which should never be destroyed be set up.

Haggai was now joined in his work by another, equally commissioned to speak God's words to His people. The "young man" Zechariah, who had certainly been born during the Captivity, was especially opposed to that temper of mind which, looking back with regret for the past, weakened the hands of those who would work in the present. Haggai had alluded to the "ancient men," in whose eyes the house now building was as nothing;¹ Zechariah called to remembrance their fathers' refusal to hearken to the former prophets, and bade them not imitate them; and at another time, showed how their sins were the cause of the Captivity.² The hopeful present, the glorious future, were all in all to Zechariah, and in seven wondrous visions much relating to these was revealed to him. The scattering of enemies, the enlargement of Jerusalem and her purification from evil, these things he looked forward to with longing; in the present he recognized the fitness and the noble qualities of the men who were striving with such great difficulties. Joshua, the High Priest, might be accused of evil, and perhaps defamed at the Persian court: he saw him tried at the heavenly tribunal, accused by the Great Adversary, and acquitted by Jehovah. Many might "despise the day of small things," and say that Zerubabel could never finish the great work he had begun:

¹ Haggai ii. 3.

² Zech. i. 4-6, vii. 11-14.

the prophet declared that the hands which laid the foundation should bring forth the headstone thereof "with shoutings." When some, taking the despondent view, would have continued in the Holy Land the fasts instituted for the captives while dwelling in Babylon, Zechariah declared these signs of punishment ended with the punishment itself, and that they ought to be turned into cheerful feasts. "Therefore love the truth and peace," he continued, and spoke of Jerusalem as henceforth a centre of worship to all nations. So with sharp warnings, direct commands, and strong hopeful words did the two new prophets animate the people. The effect of their words was marvellous. The old hindrances were still there, plenty was as yet only promised, the Samaritan enemies were still busy, the Persian decree was still in force against them, yet with redoubled courage they so heartily resumed their work, that when next their enemies wrote to the king of Persia they said, "This work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands."

But a new king, named Darius, had now succeeded to the throne. He searched for the decree of Cyrus in favour of the Jews, and when he had found it, reversed the edict which his predecessor had made against them. Thus unexpectedly the chief of their hindrances were removed. With the royal favour they worked on, and in four years from the time when the work was resumed the second Temple was finished. It was probably larger than that built by Solomon, but in splendour of decoration fell as much below it as the sacrifice offered on the day of dedication did below that presented by the great king of Israel.¹ But it stood complete, and

¹ Compare Ezra vi. 17; 1 Kings viii. 63.

was a standing memorial of the fact that true prophets had been granted to the returned people, that their words had abundant power, and that they had entirely stirred up the courage and faith of those who heard them. Zerubbabel finished the house he had begun; he placed the headstone on it, and heard the cries, "Grace, grace unto it." Of the rest of his life we know nothing. He had been assured that he was to God as the signet ring so dear to an Oriental prince, worn ever on his right hand or suspended round his neck. And doubtless through the remainder of his life he was the cherished and protected of God. Yet, as has been said, "all the tender images connected with the signet ring" are only perfectly true of the great Son of Zerubbabel,¹ Solomon and David, whose presence in the rebuilt Temple was its greatest glory, and Who set up that kingdom which will continue for ever and ever.

¹ Matt. i. 13.

LESSON IV.

THE PROPHETS AFTER THE RETURN FROM THE CAPTIVITY—MALACHI.

Read Ezra vii., viii. 15-36, ix—x. 19; Neh. i., ii., iv—vii. 5, viii., ix., xii. 27—xiii.; Mal. i—iv.

FIFTY-SEVEN years had passed away since the Temple at Jerusalem was consecrated, when Ezra the scribe left Babylon to visit his brethren in Judæa (B.C. 458). Their condition had not improved during those years. The enthusiasm kindled by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, which had borne the people over their difficulties, and brought about the completion of the Temple, had passed away. The leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua were dead; we hear of no governor appointed at once to fill the place of the first, and the descendants of Joshua who filled the high priest's office were not worthy of their father. The walls of Jerusalem remained unbuilt, and through the mixed marriages which were growing common the people were fast becoming amalgamated with the Samaritans and the heathen nations around. Ezra was himself a priest, but the title most often given to him was "the scribe." "He was a ready scribe in the law of Moses."¹

It was probably during the Captivity that the scribes became a distinct class of men. They were the inter-

¹ Ezra vii. 6.

preters of the Law, they expounded it when the old Hebrew in which it was written could no longer be understood by the people, who had acquired a new dialect since their residence in Babylon; they were the copiers who multiplied manuscripts of it. Their knowledge gave them a considerable influence over the people; we see how they afterwards used it by the notices we have of them in the New Testament. They had then become followers of the letter of the Law, not of the spirit; and our Lord classed them with the Pharisees as hypocrites, "outwardly appearing righteous unto men, within full of hypocrisy and iniquity."¹ In these earlier days of the return of the Jews, however, they held a very different position, and were probably the main cause of the Scriptures not being totally forgotten. None among them was more pure-hearted than Ezra. He "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." It was to reform the abuses which had become common among the Jews that Ezra paid his first visit to Jerusalem. His favour and influence with the then reigning king of Persia, Artaxerxes Longimanus, and his high character and learning, secured him an influence on his arrival. Even by the king he was known as "a scribe of the law of the God of heaven,"² and those who dreaded the evil result of the mixed marriages appealed to him at once as to one who could and would effect a reformation. He has left us a full account of his conduct on this occasion. The danger was a very great and imminent one, nothing less than that "the holy seed mingled among the heathen" should cease to be

¹ Matt. xxiii. 28.

² Ezra vii. 21.

a distinct people. The people appeared cured of their love for idolatry through the sorrows of the Captivity, but this union with other nations must, if it continued, make them to become a heathen people. Ezra's grief at the accounts given him was therefore intense, and he was overpowered with astonishment that the lessons of the Captivity should be so forgotten and such great ingratitude shown to God. As he sat in silence on the ground, in front of the Temple, with rent garment and torn dishevelled hair, he may have felt the vanity of his hopes of finding a holy city, obedient to the law, at Jerusalem. It was scarcely four months since his arrival, and already he saw that the Law could become forgotten as easily among the returned captives who lived around the newly-restored Temple as among their brethren left in Babylon. For the time, however, Ezra succeeded in effecting a reformation. His own profound grief communicated itself to the people. Assembled in the court of the Temple, they sat trembling, while the rain fell heavily, as at that season of the year (December) it still does in Palestine. It was impossible that they could remain exposed to it while the business went forward. They returned to their homes, and a council was regularly appointed to carry out the matter. In two months the number of those (113) guilty of these mixed marriages was ascertained, and they were separated from their strange wives. The most painful and significant fact brought to light was, that four members of the high priest's own family, and thirteen other priests, were among the guilty.¹

The effects of this reformation lasted for some time,

¹ Ezra x. 18-22.

the practice of mixed marriages having been checked. Ezra himself seems to have returned to Babylon. Thirteen years elapsed after his visit, when another Jew took his journey from Persia to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah filled the high station of cupbearer to Artaxerxes, king of Persia, and was nominated by him governor over the province of Judæa.¹ His character is known to us through the book which bears his name, great part of which is certainly written by himself. We there see him passionately devoted to his country and to his God, a man full of generous self-sacrifice, and of burning zeal, which showed itself in righteous anger against pretended worshippers as well as open enemies of the Lord. Nothing could discourage him, no difficulties wearied him; he stood almost single-handed: but the constant prayers which are a characteristic of his writings show his never-failing confidence in God. The state of the people had not improved since Ezra's visit. In Persia Nehemiah heard of the still unbuilt walls and gates of the city, and yearned to put his own hand to the work. When he had reached Jerusalem, and rode alone at night round the ruined city, no sight of heaps of rubbish, and of gates burned as the Chaldæans had left them, could discourage his resolution. When at length he got the work of the rebuilding the walls commenced, no open threatenings or secret machinations of surrounding enemies could prevail with him to stop it. His words are those of an intensely strong man, self-reliant, or rather solely reliant on his God. "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to

¹ The word 'Tirshatha' in all probability means governor.

you?" And to the false pretended friend who joined the plot against him, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in." Such determination was certain to be crowned with success, and in fifty-two days the ruined walls were rebuilt. The solemn dedication of the walls was delayed for about twelve years more; it was probably necessary to obtain the express permission of the king of Persia for an act which could have easily been misrepresented to him by Nehemiah's enemies. During this time, however, the indefatigable governor toiled on, aided now by Ezra, who seems to have returned to Jerusalem at about the time of the completion of the walls. In concert they extended the population of Jerusalem,¹ provided for its defence, caused the law to be read and explained, and the feasts to be celebrated, and induced the chief members of every class to set their seal to a covenant that they would keep the law.²

But Nehemiah was still the subject of a foreign king, and his return to Persia became necessary. He was obliged for a time to leave the city for which he had done so much; and Ezra, of whom we hear no more, either accompanied him, or may have died at this time. How long Nehemiah was absent we cannot say with certainty. But we know that, when he returned, he found that the people for whom he had so laboured had fallen away from God and from obedience to His law.³

Undaunted as ever, Nehemiah (who now dedicated the walls with great solemnity) commenced a second reformation. And now another helper stood by his

¹ Neh. vii. 4, xi. 1, 2.

² Neh. viii. ix. x.

³ Neh. xiii. 6, 7.

side, and at this time, when Ezra the priest was no longer there to aid him, the prophetic spirit again, and for the last time for many years, was manifested in Jerusalem.

Malachi has been called "the Seal" of the prophets, as his words close the Old Testament Scriptures. Of himself we know absolutely nothing save his name, but we can fix the time of his prophecies with great probability, when we remark that the sins which he especially denounced were exactly those which Nehemiah found again reappearing on his second arrival at Jerusalem. It is evident that Malachi writes at a time when the Temple-worship has been long re-established, long enough for its services to have fallen into a disrepute, and for its priests to have sunk into a negligence, which shows a great change from the days when Joshua judged in the house and kept its courts as high-priest.¹ Now, the prophet represents the priests of his time as offering to Jehovah polluted bread for the shewbread, and sick and lame and diseased beasts as the sacrifices on His altar. "What a weariness is it!" they said, and showed their contempt for the degraded offerings which they themselves presented.² Would they, the prophet asks, have offered such to their governor? Nehemiah indeed levied no taxes, like former governors, for the maintenance of his household,³ but, in accordance with Eastern custom, he must have had presents offered him, without which it would be an indignity to approach the governor. The priests, however, did not imitate his generosity in receiving no regular payments; not one among them would shut the Temple

¹ Zech. iii. 7

² Mal. i. 7, 8, 13, 14.

Neh. v. 14, 15.

doors or light the altar fires for nothing.¹ And thus, like Hophni and Phinehas of old, they "made the Lord's people to transgress," and brought into utter contempt the service of the sanctuary.

So Malachi describes the priests of his time, and the picture well agrees with what Nehemiah tells us. On his return, he found that the high priest Eliashib, who had connected himself with the Ammonite Tobiah, had assigned to his relative a considerable portion of the holy House itself.² "An Ammonite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord:"³ so said the law of Moses; but a priest who called the service of the Temple "a weariness," would not hesitate to bring him into the sacred precincts. There was no longer a living example of holiness to be found in the chief of the priests; but the prophet sets forth under the name of Levi the most perfect ideal of the true priest ever described. "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with Me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity."⁴

Eliashib and his priests, however, only turned the people around them to iniquity. When Nehemiah returned from Persia, he found the great evil from which Ezra had cleansed the people, the mixed marriages with the heathen around, again a common practice. In about twenty years the change effected by Ezra had disappeared, and the children of these marriages could not even speak the Jews' language.⁵

¹ Mal. i. 10.

² "The chamber" assigned to Tobiah was probably a great part of the outbuilding which surrounded the Temple on three sides, and contained three storeys and many rooms.

³ Deut. xxiii. 3.

⁴ Mal. ii. 6.

⁵ Neh. xiii. 23, 24.

As in the evil sacrifices offered, so here the high priest and his family had led the way in the sin. To the account which Nehemiah gives of this, Malachi adds, that in so doing the Jew had "sinned against the wife of his youth." Many had apparently put away their Hebrew wives to take the strange women in their place, and it is to these deserted women that Malachi appears to allude when he speaks of their "covering the altar of the Lord with tears."¹ Once more Nehemiah caused a reform. He cleansed the people from the sin, but chased away the grandson of the high priest, who had, as he said, "defiled the priesthood," and married the daughter of Sanballat.² This unworthy priest repaired to his father-in-law, and became high priest of that Samaritan temple built on Mount Gerizim, beneath which our Lord sat when He talked to the woman of Samaria.³

The evil example of the priests, and the custom of mixed marriages with the heathen, had led to a general disregard of the law of God. Nehemiah found "that the portions of the Levites had not been given them;" Malachi declared that the people robbed God in that they did not pay their tithes and offerings. According to their different vocations the governor and the prophet laboured to remedy this; the first recalled the Levites who had fled from JerúsaLEM, and again caused the treasuries to be prepared, and the officers appointed for the reception of the tithes; the second proclaimed that God's blessing would follow the obedience of His people.⁴ But it was hard to convince a stiff-necked and obstinate people of their sins. In the Book of

¹ Mal. ii. 13-15.

² Neh. xiii. 28, 29.

³ John iv. 20.

⁴ Neh. xiii. 10-14; Mal. iii. 8-12.

Malachi we have many instances given of the sceptical questions and of the constant objections with which they met his teaching.¹ He replies to each in turn; but he unfolds at last the fatal condition of mind which prevented a true and lasting return to God. They were coming to believe that it was "vain to serve God," that the keeping of His ordinances was but a profitless service, and that the proud, the self-indulgent, and the defiers of God, were alone to be considered happy and prosperous.² The picture is a dreadful one, and is the true key to the understanding of the short continuance of Ezra's and Nehemiah's reforms. With such thoughts in their hearts, no outward laws as to the payment of tithes or the keeping of the Sabbath would bring men into a true covenant with God. We see the complete development of these things in the picture which the four Gospels give us of the priests, scribes, rulers and people in the time of our Lord. But the same Gospels show us also bright exceptions in holy individuals who, when the Saviour was born into the world, were "waiting for the consolation of Israel."³ In the darkest times there are ever these bright lights, and in the days of Nehemiah and Malachi, no less so than in those after days of Simeon and Anna. "They that feared the Lord," in that time, the prophet tells us, "spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name."⁴

¹ Mal. i. 2, 6, 7, ii. 14, 17, iii. 7, 8, 13.

³ Luke ii. 25.

² Mal. iii. 14, 15.

⁴ Mal. iii. 16.

LESSON V.

FROM NEHEMIAH TO JUDAS MACCABÆUS (about B.C. 413 to B.C. 164).

AFTER the death of Nehemiah, the kings of Persia appear to have ruled Judæa through Persian, not Jewish governors. We know but little of Jerusalem or the province of Judæa during the years which followed the reforms of Nehemiah and the teaching of Malachi. The one incident recorded, the murder by one of the high priests of his brother within the Temple courts (B.C. 366), serves to show that the descendants of Eliashib had not followed the pure ideal set before them by the prophet.¹ The Persian rule continued until B.C. 332. During this period the gradual formation of the Canon of Holy Scripture must have been taking place. It has been generally believed that Ezra first collected the books of the Sacred Scriptures, distinguishing them from other and uninspired writings. But in all probability this work, though begun by Ezra, was not completed at once. The Bible "in its present shape was formed gradually during a lengthened interval, beginning with Ezra and extending through a part or even the whole of the Persian period, when the cessation of the prophetic

¹ Mal. ii. 5-7.

gift pointed out the necessity and defined the limits of the collection.”¹ Here and there a later addition was made, as for instance, the continuation of the pedigree in Neh. xii., where, as we know, the Jaddua there named² was the high priest when Alexander the Great made himself master of Jerusalem, about a hundred years after Nehemiah’s time. By degrees, therefore, the Jews separated the books which were inspired by God from all other compositions, and by degrees they ceased to expect the gift of prophëcy to arise among them, and termed Malachi the “Seal,” or last of the Prophets. That they had writings of less authority is clear. Some of the books which form what we call the Apocrypha were probably written at this time or soon after. The Book of Tobit was in all probability written while Judæa was still ruled by Persia. In it we trace the teaching of the scribes, who laid especial stress on the three duties of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; a teaching recognized and spiritualized by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount.³ There is, however, no evidence that the Jews ever placed the authority of these books on a level with those admitted into the Sacred Canon.

In the year B.C. 332, a most important change took place in the government of the Jews. The vision seen by Daniel in Babylon was fulfilled, the “he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth,” and smiting the ram, “brake his two horns, and cast him down to the ground.” Alexander, the Grecian conqueror, established an almost universal monarchy; and attacking the Persian Empire, brake the power of

¹ Prof. Westcott in Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. “Canon.”

² Neh. xii. 11, 22.

³ Tob. xii. 8, 9; Matt. vi. 1-18.

both the Medes and Persians, and cast down the rule of Persia for ever. Thus the second Empire, symbolized by the silver breast and arms of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, and the bear of Daniel's vision, gave place to the third Empire, the kingdom of brass, the dominion of the swift leopard, the rule of the Greeks. We are told that Alexander, when he took possession of Jerusalem, did homage to Jaddua the high priest, saying that he had seen such a priest in a vision, who had told him that he should conquer Persia. As it was the constant desire of Alexander to impress others with the belief that he was a conqueror divinely commissioned, it is highly probable that he should strive to do so when about to enter Jerusalem. On the other hand, a study of the Book of Daniel might well have prepared Jaddua to receive him as an agent appointed by God as much as Cyrus had been in earlier times. The Greek conquest of Judæa was productive of great changes to the Jews, changes which facilitated in after days the spread of Christianity, and thus affected the whole history of the world. The first of these which followed the conquest almost immediately was the removal of 100,000 Jews to the new city which the conqueror had built in Egypt, and called, after his own name, Alexandria. There were now three great settlements of Jews, those of Palestine, of Babylon, and of Egypt. From this time the Jews of the Dispersion, Jews settled in foreign countries, take a greater part in the history of the world. "A powerful hierarchy had succeeded in substituting the idea of a Church for that of a State; and the Jew was now able to wander over the world, and yet remain faithful to the God of his fathers." "The Dispersion was the out-

ward proof that a faith had succeeded to a kingdom."¹

At the death of Alexander, his empire was divided into four. The Greek rulers of Egypt and the Greek rulers of Syria possessed alternately the country of Palestine, and fought for its possession. The struggle was at length decided (B.C. 198) in favour of Antiochus the Great, king of Syria. The capital of these Greek kings of Syria was Antioch, the far-famed city founded B.C. 300, famed for its beauty and magnificence, in after years familiar to us as the starting-point of St. Paul's labours.

From Antioch the Greek kings of Syria ruled over Judæa, treating their Jewish subjects for the most part with mildness, and allowing them the exercise of their religion as freely as the kings of Persia had done. An attempt made at one time to remove treasure from the Temple was said to have been miraculously defeated without any vengeance being taken on the Jews by the Syrian power. With no foreign governor placed immediately over Jerusalem, the power and influence of the high priests must have become very great. They were not, however, for the most part, men to use this influence for any better purposes than those inspired by self-interest and the desire for power. But one name, that of Simon the Just (B.C. 300), occurs among the descendants of Joshua, the son of Josedech, of which we can say that it was borne by one worthy of his ancestry. Of this Simon the writer of the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus has given a splendid eulogy.² Simon's successors became

¹ Prof. Westcott in *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Dispersion."

² *Eccclus. i.*

less and less worthy of the priesthood, and at length, as rival candidates for the high office, sought to obtain the favour of the Greek kings by the adoption of Greek customs and the changing of their Hebrew names to Greek ones. Accordingly, instead of Joshua and Onias, we read of Jason and Menelaus, two unworthy brothers, who struggled together to obtain the high priest's office, striving which should outbid the other in the most servile adoption of Greek customs. They built a gymnasium at Jerusalem for the practice of the Greek games; they sent contributions to the games celebrated at Tyre in honour of Hercules; they sold the golden vessels of the Temple, and even offered to forsake their national laws and customs. The Jewish nation was never in more danger of losing its nationality and being "mingled with the heathen" than now. A sudden and terrible persecution saved it from this danger.

But out of the danger itself came one circumstance which, though at the time a sign of decay, was overruled by Providence to be a preparation for the spread of Christianity. The Jews, when they returned to Palestine, spoke no longer the old Hebrew of their fathers, but a language akin to it, called Aramaic, which they had learnt during their sojourn in Babylon. One great work of the scribes was now to explain to them their ancient Hebrew Scriptures.¹ But as the Jews had learned one new language in Babylon so their brethren in Egypt acquired another, and soon spoke neither Hebrew nor Aramaic, but Greek. It was probably for this cause that a Greek version of the Scriptures was prepared at Alexandria. This is the

¹ Neh. viii. 7, 8.

version known as the Septuagint. Marvellous stories were told by the Jews with regard to this translation, but the truth appears to be, that the version was made by degrees, the Pentateuch being translated first, the other books later, and that the use of the Greek language and want of familiarity with the Hebrew were the real causes which produced it. That it should come to be commonly used in Palestine as well as in Egypt would seem more remarkable, did we not remember the influence of the Greek kings of Syria, and the efforts made by the rival high priests to conciliate them by the introduction of Greek customs. With the Greek customs would come the Greek language, and with that a common use of the Greek version of the Scriptures. That it was commonly used we know from the fact, that far the greater number of the quotations from the Old Testament made in the Gospels or Epistles are taken from it.

The king for whose favour the rival high priests Jason and Menelaus were thus ready to sacrifice their nationality and their religion was Antiochus Epiphanes, whose name has become infamous through his persecution of the Jews and his attempt to destroy the worship of the true God.

It was in vain that Grecian customs and manners had been introduced into Jerusalem. The quarrels of the priests furnished Antiochus with an occasion for attacking the city and for plundering the Temple of its treasures, which he coveted. This was done B.C. 170. A dreadful massacre ensued; 40,000 people were put to death, many sold as slaves, and the sacred vessels of the Temple seized. After this act of cruelty, Antiochus dreaded yet more any sign of independence in his

subject people. He resolved therefore that all who were ruled by him should henceforth have but one law and one religion. To this end he sent two years later (B.C. 168) a force against Jerusalem. Another and more dreadful massacre followed, the streets of the city ran with blood, the Temple was desecrated, and the observance of the Law forbidden. Those who attempted to circumcise their children were punished with death. All copies of the Law were burnt, and those who possessed them killed. On the Altar of Jehovah was placed an idol-altar, on which was made an offering to Jupiter Olympius. Thus did "the little horn," "the king of fierce countenance," magnify "himself, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of His (God's) sanctuary was cast down."¹ "So near was the Jewish nation and the worship of Jehovah to total extermination." "At this crisis Divine Providence interposed, not as formerly with miraculous assistance, but by the instrumentality of human virtues; the lofty patriotism, adventurous valour, daring and sagacious soldiership, generous self-devotion, and inextinguishable zeal of heroic men in the cause of their country and their God."² All these qualities were eminently displayed in one devoted family.

Mattathias, a priest of the course of Jehoiarib,³ saw with horror the profanations committed. "Our sanctuary," he said, "even our beauty and our glory is laid waste, and the Gentiles have profaned it. To what end therefore shall we live any longer?"⁴ He refused to offer idolatrous sacrifice, and fled with his

¹ Dan. viii. 9-14, 23-25.

³ 1 Chron. xxiv. 7.

² Milman's *History of the Jews*.

⁴ 1 Macc. ii. 12, 13.

five sons to the mountains. A wild guerilla warfare ensued. Many gathered themselves to Mattathias and his sons, who descended from time to time to destroy the heathen altars around, retreating again to their fastnesses. B.C. 166, Mattathias died, but he bequeathed the resistance which he had begun to his sons, setting before them the examples of their faithful fathers from Abraham to Daniel, and appointing his third son, Judas, called Maccabæus, to succeed him as conductor of the war.

It is impossible to follow here minutely the victories of the dauntless Judas, who, for the next five years (166-161), was the recognized leader of the patriots. "He gat his people great honour, and put on a breastplate as a giant, and girt his warlike harness about him, and he made battles, protecting the host with his sword. In his acts he was like a lion, and like a lion's whelp roaring for his prey." So did his countrymen describe him, and his own words not less than his deeds inspired them with courage. "Strength cometh from heaven;" "We fight for our lives and our laws."¹ Such appeals were not lost, but gave such force to those who followed him, that Judas, with fearful odds against him, was invariably victorious over the armies of the king of Syria. At Beth-horon, the scene of Joshua's great victory in the first conquest of Canaan, at Emmaus, after keeping a solemn fast at Mizpeh, and at Bethsurun, he gained signal victories, and at length entered Jerusalem, and found the ruined and defiled Temple in his hands.² The sight that greeted their eyes was a terrible one. The courts of the Temple lay desolate, and shrubs grew in them "like

¹ 1 Macc. iii. 3, 4, 19, 21.

² 1 Macc. iii. iv.

the underwood of a forest," the chambers of the priests were thrown down, the altar of burnt-offerings stood profaned, with an idolatrous shrine placed on it. The first wild lamentations over, the Jews proceeded to work. The most blameless of the priests that could be found were chosen to cleanse the sanctuary, everything that had suffered defilement was removed, even the altar itself, and a new one placed instead of it. New vessels were made for the Holy Place; and, on the anniversary of the day of its pollution three years before, a solemn feast of re-dedication was held (B.C. 164). For eight days they kept the feast, much in the same manner as they kept the Feast of Tabernacles, not without remembrance of those sad feasts which they had kept while wandering on the mountains. It was to them so great a day of joy and thanksgiving, that they ordained that it should be kept yearly for ever among the Jews. From their joy at their deliverance it was called "the Feast of Lights;" but it is under the name "Feast of Dedication," that St. John mentions it when he tells us, that our Saviour was at Jerusalem when it took place, "and it was winter," and He "walked in the Temple, in Solomon's porch."²

² JOHN X. 22, 23.

LESSON VI.

FROM JUDAS MACCABÆUS TO JOHN THE BAPTIST.

FROM the Feast of Lights, or re-dedication of the Temple by Judas Maccabæus, we may date the commencement of the independence which the Jews enjoyed, until they, in common with all the nations around, were overshadowed by the power of the Romans. This independence was not indeed unbroken, and it was not at once that the Jews ceased to recognize the supremacy of the kings of Syria. Yet this supremacy was little more than nominal ; and for the most part the Jews secured from this time a native government, which they owed first to a patriotic and noble resistance to tyranny, and afterwards to the skilful advantages taken by their leaders of the feuds between rival pretenders to the throne of Antioch.

The real rulers from this time were the family of Judas, who were called from the name of an ancestor "Asmonæans," and from the surname of Judas "Maccabees." Judas himself lived for only four years more after the dedication. This remainder of his life was spent in fighting, and maintaining the struggle he had begun. Always victorious, he was at one time recognized as governor of Judæa by the Syrians, then again attacked by them, and at last slain at Elusa (B.C.

161), fighting desperately against an immense Syrian force. His death was as heroic as his life had been; and though for a time kept in check, the patriot party were nerved by it to a more determined resistance.

Jonathan, the brother of Judas, was recognized by them as their leader. By alternate victories and negotiations he gained back all that had been lost at the death of Judas, and once more established the Maccabæan power in Jerusalem. He took at that time (B.C. 152) another step which had a great influence over the future history of the Jews, he assumed the high priesthood as well as the civil power, and was the first priest king of the Asmonæan line, though the title of king was not yet assumed. This was a great change, because the Maccabæan family, though of the tribe of Levi, and probably of the house of Eleazar, did not belong to the high-priestly family. Jonathan was not, however, the first high priest who was not descended from Joshua the son of Josedech. The true heir to the high priesthood at the death of the unworthy Menelaus was Onias, who, leaving Palestine, fled to Egypt, and there accepted the office of high priest to a new temple erected for the Jews by the king of Egypt. Onias justified this step by appealing to the words of Isaiah, predicting "an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt,"¹ but he was looked on as a renegade by the Palestinian Jews. In his place the Syrian kings had raised to the high priesthood an adherent of their own of the stock of Aaron, who took the name of Alcimus. This man, through the rest of his life, opposed himself to the Maccabæan party. It was at his death that Jonathan

¹ Isa. xix. 18, 19.

became high priest. He continued the real ruler and leader of his people until B.C. 144, when, by the treachery of Tryphon, a Syrian noble, he was imprisoned and murdered.

Another of the heroic Maccabæan brothers, however, stepped forward to fill his place. Simon, the second son, had been named by his father Mattathias, "a man of counsel," who should be a father to his people.¹ He, as well as his brothers, had distinguished himself in war, and he has been termed of the five brothers "the calmest, the most discreet and prudent of them all." Under his leadership the country and people of the Jews rose to a height of prosperity and power which was far beyond any that they had enjoyed since the return from Babylon. Simon was not only recognized as high priest and prince of Judæa, but the reigning king of Syria renounced all claims to tribute from the Jews. The year in which they received this acknowledgment of their independence was reckoned the first year of "the freedom of Jerusalem."² Under Simon the Jews enjoyed a few years of peace, during which he occupied himself with the internal affairs of the kingdom. He issued a new coinage, dated from "the deliverance of Sion," and avoiding, in compliance with Jewish feeling, all figures of men, stamped the coins with the cups used for the Temple libations, the almonds of Aaron's rod, and such devices. He encouraged trade and agriculture, as Solomon and Uzziah had done in the days of the older Jewish kingdom, and strengthened the alliance with Rome first entered into by his brother Judas. Simon's reign was throughout prosperous; yet he did not escape the fate

¹ 1 Macc. ii. 65.

² 1 Macc. xiii. 41, 42.

which appeared inevitable to one of his family. The last of the five Maccabæan brothers, he died like the rest a violent death, being murdered, with his elder son, by the treachery of his son-in-law, who was governor of Jericho, and hoped to gain for himself the kingdom. In this however he was not successful, and Simon was succeeded by his son John Hyrcanus (B.C. 135).

Though hard pressed by the Syrians in the early part of his reign, Hyrcanus was at length able to throw off their yoke entirely, and reigned supreme for more than twenty years, recognized by the Romans, and secured from other enemies through their alliance. The period during which he ruled the Jews is a very interesting one, because it is a period in which we trace the full adoption of many opinions and modes of thought which long before were doubtless growing up among the people. From this time also date many institutions and many sects which we find fully established in the days of our Lord's life on earth.

The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, though hinted at in the Psalms of David, and more clearly announced by the prophets, was taught more definitely, and helped to sustain the Jews during the suffering and persecution they had to endure. It henceforth became a cherished belief and watchword to a large section of the nation.

We have further evidence of the religious thought of the nation, in the writings which were either written at this period or a little before it. The apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus is an expression of the theology of the Palestinian Jews at this time. This work, written in Hebrew, or possibly in Aramaic, bears no trace of

the influence of the Egyptian Jews, but may be taken as representing to us what was thought and read in Jerusalem. The praise of agriculture reminds us of the peace enjoyed under Simon.¹ The ideas expressed about the nature of God conform strictly to those of Moses, but the experiences of later years, and the study of the prophets, had induced a belief in the extension of the Divine mercy to all mankind.² The writer does not claim to speak in the power and spirit of a prophet, but he echoes again the words of Malachi, with hope for the future, when he recounts the history of Elijah.³ With these hopes for the future mingle strong national animosities. We may instance the words in which the writer speaks of the Samaritans as "the foolish people that dwell in Sichem."⁴

This animosity achieved a signal triumph during the reign of Hyrcanus. The Samaritans, as we have seen, were undoubtedly not a Jewish people, but the descendants of settlers sent to occupy the land of Israel from Assyria.⁵ Repulsed on this account by Zerubbabel (Ezra iv. 3), when they offered to help the Jews to rebuild the Temple, they from that time became their bitterest enemies. The renegade priest chased away by Nehemiah⁶ established for them a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, above their metropolis of Shechem, or Sychar, and procured for them a copy of the Law. The Jews denounced their worship as idolatrous, their copy of the Law as spurious. The Samaritans in turn annoyed the Jews in every possible manner, waylaying pilgrims to

¹ Eccus. vii. 15.

³ Mal. iv. 5, 6; Eccus. xlviii. 10.

⁵ 2 Kings xvii. 24-41

² Eccus. xviii. 11-13

⁴ Eccus. i. 25, 26.

⁶ See page 35.

Jerusalem, and lighting false beacon fires, when the Jews sought by signals to make their brethren in Babylon share with them the Feast of the Passover. During the reign of Hyrcanus the Jews gained the upper hand. Hyrcanus captured Sychem, threw down the temple on Mount Gerizim, and at a later period utterly destroyed the city of Samaria itself. The Samaritans, however, continued to worship towards the mountain on which their temple had stood, and the bitterness of feeling continued between the two peoples, as we learn from the notices of it in the Gospels.¹

Hyrcanus also turned his arms successfully against the Idumæans or Edomites, who had taken possession of the south of Palestine, and compelled them to receive circumcision and to conform to the Jewish law. The Idumæans became thus identified with their conquerors, and before long an Idumæan family attained to the supreme power in Palestine.

It is to the times of John Hyrcanus that we must refer the composition of the first Book of Maccabees. This history is our best authority for the Maccabæan struggle, and is evidently trustworthy and candid. The poetical beauty of the narrative renders it worthy of its noble theme. It is the work of a Jew of Palestine, and was originally written in Hebrew; it is brought down to the times of Hyrcanus;² but, it has been truly said, "it would have been almost impossible to write a history so full of simple faith and joyous triumph in the midst of the troubles which, early in the succeeding reign, threatened too distinctly the coming dissolution of the state."

It is in this book that we find mention of the

¹ See Luke ix. 53; John iv. 9.

² 1 Macc. xvi. 23, 24.

"Assidæans," or "the righteous," who are spoken of as zealous adherents of the Maccabees. They were no doubt at first distinguished chiefly for their adherence to national customs and opposition to Grecian influence. With their love of all that was national, blended a belief that the traditions, with regard to religion, held among the Jews were of equal authority with the Law; they affirmed indeed, at a later time, that these had been delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, and handed down by word of mouth. These traditions they gradually added to, until they became burdensome rules, affecting the most trivial affairs of daily life. The "righteous ones" were doubtless brave assistants in time of war; but they became in times of peace bigots, who would tolerate none but those who were identical with themselves in thought and customs. Under their later name of "Pharisees," "the separated ones," they are well known to us in the Gospel history. The Pharisees were undoubtedly the most popular sect in Palestine, but they were not the only one. A much smaller sect, the Sadducees, composed probably for the most part of the high-priestly family and their adherents, denied the authority of the traditions so dear to the Pharisee, and proclaimed the authority of the Law as greater than even that of the prophets.

To the people throughout Palestine the knowledge of the prophets, and reverence for both the Law and the prophets, was secured by what may be termed the "parochial system" of the Jews. SYNAGOGUES may have been established here and there before, but it is from the time of Hyrcanus that we must date their existence in every town or village. Here "the prophets," as well as "Moses," were read "every

sabbath day ;”¹ here fixed forms of prayer were used ; and the influence of the synagogues undoubtedly aided the complete disappearance of idolatry after the Captivity. They probably tended to diminish the influence of the hereditary priesthood, whose ministrations were not required in the synagogue as in the Temple, and in so doing they prepared the way for the great High Priest Who was to arise after the order of Melchisedec, when that of the sons of Aaron was about to pass away.

The last years of John Hyrcanus (who died B.C. 109), and the reigns of his sons, were troubled by the discords which broke out with ever increasing fury between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Asmonæan princes soon degenerated from their heroic forefathers. They became weak and self-seeking, more often turning their arms against each other than against the common foe. At length the feeble Hyrcanus II., grandson to John Hyrcanus, fell completely into the power and control of Antipater, an Idumæan of great courage and cunning, both of which qualities distinguished his family. The quarrels of the weak Hyrcanus and his brother caused at length the armed interference of the Romans. Pompeius, their general, besieged and took Jerusalem, entered the Temple, and penetrating, to the horror of the Jews, even into the Holy of Holies, expressed his astonishment at the absence of any statue or representation of a deity. From this time the Roman power continued really supreme, and though Judæa was not yet termed a province of Rome, none could rule there without the permission of the Mistress of the world. “The fourth

¹ Acts xv. 21.

kingdom" of Daniel, "diverse from all kingdoms," which should "devour the whole earth,"¹ from this time made its presence felt. From this time, too, Judæa and its affairs became known to the Roman world; and the captives taken to Rome to swell the triumph of Pompeius formed the first members of that colony of Jews which St. Paul found established in the Eternal City.²

The Idumæan Antipater and his family, who had contrived to ingratiate themselves with the Romans, reaped the greatest advantage from this change in Jewish affairs. While he lived Antipater retained his power. After his death, his son Herod, having allied himself with the Asmonæan princes by his marriage with Mariamne, the granddaughter of Hyrcanus II., was raised to the throne by Roman influence (B.C. 40). Herod the Great was the last independent sovereign of Judæa. The crimes of this man were only equalled by his extraordinary talents. The many murders committed by him included those of all the members (with two exceptions) of the Sanhedrim, or great council of the Jews, which had ventured once to arraign him before them. To these may be added the murders of his beautiful wife Mariamne and of almost all her relations, and those of his own sons; his treatment of these caused the remark of the Roman Emperor, that "he would rather be Herod's swine than his sons." The career of blood was only closed by the massacre of those infants at Bethlehem, who died unconsciously for their Lord, and whom the Church has always known as "Holy Innocents." But if Herod was distinguished for his crimes, he was so also for the extra-

¹ Dan. vii. 23.

² Acts xxviii. 17-29.

ordinary cunning and dexterity with which he maintained his position in the face of great difficulties, and insinuated himself into the favour of the many individuals who rose to power in this changeful period. He secured to the Jews a lingering independence; but, Idumæan at heart as well as by birth, he rebuilt the temple of Samaria as well as that at Jerusalem. This last was done with great magnificence, but with care that it should appear to be a restoration of that of Zerubbabel rather than a new building. The additions to it, made after his death, were not yet completed when the disciples showed their Master the stones collected for the work.¹ But the splendour of the renewed Temple could hardly have deceived the Jews as to the absence of true religion in Herod. The party who supported his half foreign dominion, and that of his successors, were distinguished from their compatriots by the name of Herodians.²

Governed thus by an Idumæan family, overshadowed by the power of Rome, divided into sects filled with hatred for each other, and influenced by a succession of high priests utterly unworthy of their office, the Jewish people were at length, and for the first time since the days of Malachi, startled by the voice of a true prophet speaking among them. The "Messenger of the Covenant"³ came; Elias "which was for to come" appeared; and in the wilderness the voice cried, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."⁴

¹ Mark xiii. 1.

² Mark xii. 13.

³ Mal. iii. 1.

⁴ Mal. iii. 1, iv. 5, 6; Matt. xi. 14; Isa. xl. 3.

LESSON VII.

THE EARLY MESSIANIC PROPHECIES.

WE shall devote our last six Lessons to the Messianic teaching of the earlier books of the Old Testament, together with that of the Temple worship and of the Prophets. That of the Psalms has already been noted in the fourth part of this Manual.

1. *The first promise of a Messiah* was given, as we have seen, to Eve immediately after the Fall. Its obscurity misled her, not improbably, into supposing that its fulfilment was at hand when Cain was born. Yet on one point the promise, or prophecy, whichever we regard it, was very clear. The first great law of Redemption—"the making perfect through suffering"—was distinctly laid down. The Saviour must suffer, if He is to overcome. "And the LORD God said unto the serpent; . . . I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : IT shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."¹

2. *The blessings of Shem and Japheth.* When the human race made, as it were, a fresh start after the Deluge, in the family of Noah, it was perhaps to be expected that there should be at least some new inti-

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

mation given of the line of the Promised Seed. Such appears to have been the blessing of Shem by Noah. "Blessed be Jehovah God of Shem."¹ With Shem should be the knowledge of the true God; in him, therefore, from whom according to the flesh Christ came, there lay hidden a blessing for all nations. To him Japheth, enlarged as to worldly power and knowledge, should come to be taught about Jehovah. The outlines of all subsequent history are drawn in Noah's words. Though there is as yet no advance in the *idea* of the Messiah's office and work, yet the family of mankind from whom He should spring is dimly suggested.

3. *The promise to Abraham.* With the call of Abraham the history of the Church receives a third and fresh impulse. (a) And first, in the promise of a universal blessing to descend upon mankind through his seed, Abraham was assured that he should be the progenitor of the promised Saviour; whilst in the fact that the descent should be through a son born according to promise, there was foreshadowed the wonderful birth of Jesus Christ. But (b) the idea of a suffering Messiah was developed. Abraham's call to leave his father's home and his native country may well have prepared him for this thought. The separation must have been painful, snapping as it did those ties of kindred which all men hold dear. In the long and often trying life of sojourning in a strange land the idea must have been strengthened. In the thought of a heavenly city, when the nomad life should end and the promises of God be fulfilled, there was a foreshadowing, albeit a faint one, of the career of Him

¹ Gen. ix. 26.

Who for the joy set before Him should endure the cross, despising its shame. Even in the promise, "I will curse him that curseth thee," there was wrapped up the thought of suffering, of righteousness persecuted by unrighteousness; and in the mocking of Ishmael this same contest between truth and falsehood was typified and set forth. But (c), above all, not only was the suffering of the promised Saviour typified; but the very manner of it most distinctly foreshadowed, by the sacrifice of Isaac. There must be the shedding of blood—the giving up of a life, nay more, a conquest over death; for Abraham received Isaac again, as in a figure, from the grave.

That Abraham seized hold of the meaning of his own life and of Isaac's is abundantly clear from what our Lord says.¹ Abraham did see in it all Jesus Christ, and he rejoiced in the sight. He recognized a Divine purpose in all that happened to him, and through the long centuries that were first to roll by, He saw the Day of Christ, and the completed victory over death and sin.

4. *Jacob's blessing of Judah.*² This blessing has been from the earliest Christian times, and even earlier amongst the Jews, regarded as prophetic of the Messiah. As Isaac and Jacob had been specially designated as His progenitors, so now Jacob on his deathbed signifies in which of his sons the Messianic line should be continued.

The prophecy, though sketching in rough outline something of the actual future history of the tribe of Judah, with its long line of kings, and its capital city, the centre of Jewish hopes and longings, is in reality

¹ John viii. 56; Heb. xi. 13.

² Gen. xlix. 8-10.

full of deep spiritual truth. The hand upon the neck of the enemies, and the father's children bowing down before him, represent not only the victories of Jesus Christ over His and our spiritual foes, and our worship and adoration of Him, but they anticipate as well the prophecy of Isaiah,¹ the coming of the nations to Judah for spiritual food :—"Surely God is in thee, and there is no God else."

In the designation of Judah as a lion our thoughts are carried on to St. John's description in Rev. v. 5: "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed." And when the Apostle looked, He saw no lion, but a Lamb standing in the midst of the elders. The warlike characteristics are obscured by the peaceful ones. So it is in Jacob's prophecy. The central thought of the whole blessing is the continuance of the sceptre in Judah until Shiloh come—the man of rest and peace, that is, the peaceful One. We lose the whole beauty of this passage if we regard the sceptre as simply an emblem of earthly power and sovereignty. It is rather a prophecy that the knowledge of the true God should remain with Judah for an appointed time. If a Queen of Sheba or an eunuch of Ethiopia want to hear of Divine truth, they must go to Jerusalem. If a Naaman is healed, or a Nebuchadnezzar humbled, it is that they may acknowledge the God of Israel. But when Shiloh comes, Who is the Prince of Peace, the One speaking peace, and Who leaves His peace with His disciples, the sceptre is no longer Judah's exclusive possession. All nations share in the knowledge of Jehovah, although

¹ Isa. xlv. 14.

even now it is to Judah's Lion they gather, for security, rest and peace.¹

5. *Balaam's prophecy.*² Balaam appears to have taken his figure of the sceptre in this prophecy from Jacob's blessing. His words attained a very clear and literal fulfilment in David's victories over Moab and surrounding nations. But it had a far higher spiritual fulfilment. Balaam's star of Jacob carries us on in thought to the star of Bethlehem, the guide of the Magi to the birthplace of Jesus Christ, and speaks to us of "the True Light Which lighteth every man which cometh into the world." The Sceptre speaks as before of spiritual dominion ; and, as in later prophecies, so here, Moab and other nations stand for the spiritual enemies of the truth—for those who in all time shall set themselves as opponents of Jesus Christ, but who shall in the end be smitten and overcome.

6. *Moses' promise of a prophet.*³ The words of the great Lawgiver distinctly require (a) that the Prophet of Whom he speaks should be some single Person ; (b) that this Person should exercise an office akin to that which Moses had exercised, the office of leader and legislator, Who should speak to God face to face ; and (c) that He should appear at some great crisis in the world's spiritual history, when there was strong need for a renewed call to righteousness.

All these requirements are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

¹ There seems no doubt that we are to understand "Shiloh" as a proper name of the promised Messiah,—the first one of prophecy. Nor can we wonder that the Israelites should, in remembrance of Jacob's words, name the first home of their national sanctuary "Shiloh," or the place of rest, when the toils of conquest were over. How deeply their great ancestor's words sank into the national heart we see from Isa. ix. 6, xxxiii. 22 ; Ps. lxxii.

² Numb. xxiv. 17-19.

³ Deut. xviii. 15-19.

No prophet of the Old Testament fulfils them. Nor does the prophetic order, taken as a whole, fulfil them. For neither of the whole body, nor yet of any single prophet could it be truly said that one like unto Moses had been raised up.¹

Yet the "Spirit of Christ" spoke² in all the prophets. They were but precursors of Him, and therefore in some limited sense each true prophet of Jehovah may be said to have offered a fulfilment of Moses' promise.³

The New Testament shows us that the general sense of the Jewish people understood the promise of Moses of the Messiah. Philip, in announcing to Nathanael that he had found Him of Whom Moses in the Law did write, evidently had this passage in his mind.⁴ So had the people when, after the feeding of the five thousand, they exclaimed, "This is of a truth the Prophet that should come into the world."⁵ So had those who, when Jesus spoke of the living water, were convinced that He was the Prophet.⁶ And again, when St. Peter, at Solomon's Porch, and St. Stephen, just before his martyrdom, quoted the very words of Moses, and applied them to Jesus, they appealed in reality to the recognized and well-known interpretation of the words.⁷

Again, when our Lord says to the Jews that Moses wrote of Him,⁸ He seems manifestly to refer to this prophecy; and if we compare Deut. xviii. 18, 19, "I will put My words into His Mouth; and . . . whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He

¹ Deut. xxxiv. 10. See also Numb. xii. 6-8.

² 1 Pet. i. 11.

³ That Moses did make some reference to the order of the prophets seems clearly shown by vv. 20-22 of Deut. xviii.

⁴ John i. 45.

⁵ John vi. 14.

⁶ John vii. 42.

⁷ Acts iii. 22, vii. 37.

⁸ John v. 46.

shall speak in My Name, I will require it of him," with John v. 38-43, "Ye have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not; . . . I am come in My Father's Name, and ye receive Me not," we see in what our Lord says a plain reference to Moses' words.¹

7. *The Angel of the LORD.* This designation of some Person, who appeared to Hagar, Abraham, and others, occurs frequently in the Pentateuch, and in other parts of the Old Testament. This Angel of the LORD speaks of Himself as if He were God. Thus to Hagar He says, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly;"² to Abraham, "I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me;"³ and to Jacob He says, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar."⁴ We may apply the same principle of interpretation to the other instances recorded.⁵ Hence it has been the constant belief of the Church that this Angel of the LORD was none other than the Son of God, the Divine Word, the Second Person of the Ever-blessed Trinity. Those to whom this Angel appeared felt convinced that they had seen God. We cannot, however, regard this title as strictly prophetic. Nevertheless, to the more spiritually-minded Israelites it may well have brought the new and further conviction that the Promised Messiah was not simply to be an earthly deliverer, but a heavenly; not only, though most truly, a descendant of Abraham, but also the Son of God; not man only, but God also.

¹ We should note also that the contrast drawn in Heb. iii. 1-6 is not between our Lord and one of the prophets, but between Him and Moses.

² Gen. xvi. 10.

³ Gen. xxii. 11, 12.

⁴ Gen. xxxi. 13.

⁵ The chief of these are: Numb. xxii. 23-35; Judges ii. 1-4, vi. 11-27. xiii. 2-22.

LESSON VIII.

MESSIANIC TEACHING OF THE THREE GREAT FESTIVALS.

IN addition to the smaller and less important festivals, such as the new moons and the sabbaths, there were three great festivals appointed by God, which were invested with peculiar solemnities, and of which a special observance was required. These were the Feast of the Passover, the Feast of Harvest or of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles or of the Ingathering. On these three great feasts every grown man in Israel was required to go up to the place of the national Sanctuary, there to make his offering unto the Lord. The object of this rule is very evident. It was intended to guard against two great dangers to which the Israelites were liable :—(1) the lapsing into idolatry, and (2) the loss of national life. Very prone to copy the nations around them, they were continually ready to forget the Lord their God Who had done so great things for them ; and divided as they were into twelve tribes, different and sometimes conflicting interests would be likely to arise, tending constantly to the disintegration of the people as a nation. By the regulations made regarding these three Festivals, both these dangers were guarded against, and would pro-

bably have been altogether avoided, had the Festivals been observed as God intended that they should be. Had the whole nation assembled three times a year in the place which Jehovah chose "to put His Name there," full of devotion and loyalty to their Great Divine King, we can scarcely suppose that they could have lapsed into the miserable idolatries to which they fell away, or have so entirely lost the feeling of being one people as to be unwilling to assist one another against a common foe.

The Passover.

The chief passages bearing on this feast are—Exod. xii. xiii. 3-10, xxiii. 14-19, xxxiv. 18-26; Lev. xxiii. 4-14; Numb. ix. 1-14, xxviii. 16-25; Deut. xvi. 1-6.

The first and chiefest of these festivals, and the one most full of significance to us Christians, was the Feast of the Passover, or, as it was also called, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was instituted before the Law was given, and was first observed on the night of departure from Egypt. It was to be an ordinance for ever to keep in memory their wonderful deliverance, when "the Lord passed over the houses of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt," and a new nation, as it were, was born into the world.

The feast commenced on the 14th day of the month Nisan with the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, the Lamb of "the passing over." The next day was a special sabbath, a day of holy convocation, and on the 16th the first sheaf of corn from the barley harvest was offered. Special sacrifices were ordained for each day during the feast, which was to last seven days, and to

be concluded on the seventh day with an holy convocation, when no servile work was to be done.¹

The essential feature of the feast was the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb. It is styled emphatically "the Lord's Sacrifice," "My Sacrifice;" and around it gathered the chief symbolical and typical teaching of the ordinance. In the rule that not a bone of the animal was to be broken, the Hebrews were taught that their strength lay in preserving the unity of their nation, and the Gospel teaches us that it typified the union of all Christians in our Lord Jesus Christ.² He is the true Passover, the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot, Who was slain for us, Whose "precious blood" has redeemed and delivered us from the bondage of sin.

Moreover, as the Paschal Lamb was a continual witness to the Israelites of their deliverance from bondage, and of the many blessings accompanying it, so the sacrifice of JESUS CHRIST on the cross is a constant witness to us Christians of the infinite blessings wrought by His death.³ And as to the Israelites the

¹ These observances were not all possible at the first Passover in Egypt, and some rules made then were modified afterwards to suit the altered condition of things. Thus at the Passover in Egypt there was (1) no day of holy convocation; (2) no sheaf of corn; (3) no special sacrifices each day of the feast. Afterwards the animals were to be slain at the national Sanctuary, and the blood to be sprinkled not on the lintels and door-posts, but on the altar. At the first Passover all were to partake, men and women; afterwards it was optional with women. The order "not to go out of the house until the morning," is said only to have been observed in Egypt.

² John xix. 36.

³ 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. In addition to the thought of the perennial feast, the daily spiritual rejoicing of the Christian in contemplating the blessings of Christ's Death, the choice of this passage as part of the special anthem on Easter Day, suggests to us the connection between the eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Communion, and

roasted lamb was the outward sign of the grace which had been given, and the mercy which had been shown them, so to the Christian the bread and the wine, in the Lord's Supper, are the outward signs of the inward spiritual grace given unto him through communion with His Divine Lord.¹

A second ordinance of the Passover Feast was the very strict one, that during it only unleavened bread was to be eaten. Here again the ruling idea seems to be, that leaven symbolizes the pride and vanity which puff up and corrupt the heart; whereas unleavened bread is the fit emblem of a lowly contrite spirit. St. Paul saw this truth, and pointed it out to the Corinthians, when he exhorted them to "keep the feast not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."²

The offering of the first sheaf of new corn on the 16th day of Nisan was intended as an expression of thankfulness for the harvest just commenced. But it also symbolized to the Jews the dedication of the first-born to God, and the Apostles St. Paul and St. John teach us that it typified the resurrection of Jesus Christ, "the first-fruits of them that slept," "the first-begotten of the dead."³

There grew up as time went on certain customs or observances at the feast, which seem to be referred to in the New Testament. Such were the drinking four cups of wine at stated intervals during the paschal

the eating of the Paschal lamb by the Israelites. See further Bishop Andrewes' Sermon vii. on The Resurrection.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 16-18; Exod. xix. 5, 6; 1 Pet. ii. 9.

² 1 Cor. v. 8. See further Mr. Clark's art. on "The Passover" in the *Dictionary of the Bible*.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 20; Col. i. 18; Rev. i. 5.

meal, of which two are supposed to be alluded to in St. Luke (xxii. 17-20);¹ and the singing the hymn or Hallel at the end of the feast.² The bitter herbs appear to have been made into sauce, into which the bread and meat were dipped;³ and the rule that no one should go out of the door of his house until the morning (Exod. xii. 22) was probably not observed in later times.⁴

The whole teaching of the festival as a type seems to be this; that as the Israelites were preserved in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and at last, after their long wanderings, entered the Promised Land, and first ate of its corn when they kept the Passover immediately after passing the Jordan, so the disciple of Jesus Christ, by faith in his Divine Lord, in His sacrifice, death, and resurrection, looks onward through the wilderness of this life to the "passing through the waters" of death, and to the entrance into the Heavenly Country, there to enjoy, as his real food, the Presence of God.

The Feast of Pentecost.

The chief passages bearing on this Feast are—Exod. xxiii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 15-22; Numb. xxviii. 26-31; Deut. xvi. 9-12.

The Feast of Harvest or of Weeks, or, as it came to be called in after times when the Greek language became common, the Feast of Pentecost, was the second great Hebrew festival. Unlike the other two, it was limited to one day, the fiftieth after the day on which the Paschal

¹ See also 1 Cor. x. 16; Ps. cxvi. 13.

² Isa. xxx. 29; Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26.

³ Matt. xxvi. 23; John xiii. 26.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26; John xiv. 31.

sheaf was offered. Its object was to praise and thank God for the harvest, on which a blessing had been sought by the offering of the first sheaf of barley at the Passover. The peculiar feature of the feast was the offering of two loaves of wheaten flour leavened. These, because they were leavened, could not be offered upon the altar. They were simply waved before the Lord, and then given to the priests. Thus the most useful of the earth's fruits was presented to God in the form in which it is used for the support of life. And in this, as it is thought, is the true meaning of the injunction.¹ But the leavened loaves may remind the Christian of our Lord's teaching in the parable of the woman hiding leaven in three measures of meal, and of that working of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts which produced such glorious fruits on that great Day of Pentecost, when the "cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon the disciples, and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." The Feast of the Harvest, "when the valleys stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing," when "the Lord's hand is opened, and the desire of every living thing satisfied," was indeed a fitting day on which to shed abroad the gifts of the Spirit, and to gather in the first-fruits of the spiritual harvest.

The gathered-in harvest and the loaves baked from the new corn were the type moreover of the work of Jesus Christ, receiving its crown and accomplishment in the descent of the Holy Ghost. This also had been prefigured at Mount Sinai. The Feast of Pentecost synchronized with the Giving of the Law, which was the true completion of the work begun in the De-

¹ See art. "Pentecost" in *D. of B.* and *Speaker's Comm.* on Lev. xliii. 17; also Bp. Wordsworth's commentary on same passage.

liverance from Egypt. The Law indeed was the great spiritual gift of God to the Jewish Church. The Pentecostal feast was in a manner dependent upon the Passover which had gone before. So the pouring out of the Holy Ghost must be traced back to the suffering and death, resurrection and ascension, of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Feast of Tabernacles.

The chief passages bearing on this Feast are—Exod. xxiii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 34-36, 39-43; Numb. xxix. 12-38; Deut. xvi. 13-15.

This was the third and last of the three great festivals. It was the feast of the ingathering, the "harvest home" of the Israelites, when the olives and the vines had yielded their fruits as well as the corn. During the seven days of its observance the people dwelt in booths or tents made of the boughs of thick-foliaged trees, and erected upon the house-tops, in the courts of the Temple, and in some of the main streets of the city.¹ This erection of booths was omitted after Joshua's time, but restored by Ezra after an interval of nearly 1000 years. The intention of the feast was twofold;—first, to remind the Israelites, when they had become a settled people, of their nomadic life in the wilderness, and of God's mercy to them there; and second, to call forth a spirit of thankfulness to God, Who had "made their garners full and plenteous with all manner of store." During the continuance of the feast, which was remarkable for the number of sacrifices offered, the Law was publicly read on each day.² Then, on the eighth day, when the people had returned

¹ Neh. viii. 16.

² Deut. xxx. 10-13; Neh. viii. 18.

to their houses, a Sabbath was kept, a holy convocation and a solemn assembly. It is said to have been the most popular of their feasts with the Jews. It does not seem to have had any special bearing upon Christian doctrine, but our Lord is recorded to have gone up to Jerusalem on one occasion to keep this feast,¹ and it is supposed that in His teaching He alluded to two of its customs. These were the bringing of water from the Pool of Siloam, and pouring it into a silver font or bowl, which stood near the altar, and the lighting up at night the court of the women with two great golden candelabra. To the one custom Jesus is thought to have alluded, when on the last and great day of the feast, probably the eighth, He cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink,"² and to the other, when He said, "I am the Light of the world."³ He would divert their minds from dwelling in and trusting upon outward symbols, and lift them up to faith in Him, as He Who could alone supply the Bread of Life and the Water of Life freely, and in Whose Presence alone is there no need of the light of the sun.

¹ John vii. 2, 14.

² John vii. 37.

³ John viii. 12.

LESSON IX.

MESSIANIC TEACHING OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS SERVICES.

SOON after the Israelites arrived in the wilderness of Sinai, God manifested His presence on the mount and gave the people through Moses the first great group of laws contained in Exod. xix.-xxiii. Then a solemn covenant was made (xxiv.) and Moses again called up into the mount, where a vision of God's glory was vouchsafed to him. During the forty days and nights that he was in the mount, Moses received from God the pattern of the tabernacle and the ark, and the rules for the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood.

The tabernacle, with the ark and the mercy-seat which it covered, was the symbol to the Israelites of Jehovah's constant presence with them, and the witness to them, amid the heathen nations by whom they were surrounded, of the Unity of God. It was so constructed, that it could be easily taken down, and removed from place to place, and so accompany the people in their journeys. It was emphatically the tent or tabernacle of "meeting,"¹ because there the people met God. There Moses went to receive instructions

¹ Not "of the congregation," as in our Authorized Version. It was not the place where the people met one another, but where they met God.

from God ; there Miriam and Aaron were summoned when they made a sedition against Moses,¹ and there "the people drew near and stood before the Lord."² There in front of the tabernacle stood the altar, upon which the priests offered the sin-offerings and the burnt-offerings for themselves and the people. Within the tabernacle there were two divisions, called respectively the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. These were separated by a veil, symbolical of the separation for a time between the Jew and the Gentile, but which was done away in Christ, at Whose death the symbolical veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Within these two parts of the tabernacle were placed certain of the most precious things belonging to the Hebrew worship,³ and into the Holy of Holies no one ever went, except the High Priest once every year, on the Great Day of Atonement, when he carried there the blood of the sacrifice, offering it for himself and for the sins of the people.

Now the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us that this tabernacle, and all belonging to it, was a figure or type for the then present time, of what was to be after when Jesus Christ should come. And the sacrifices also were typical of Jesus Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. Let us try to understand a little more about them.

The New Testament teaches us that all sacrifices which were offered to God before the coming of Jesus Christ were really a looking forward to His one great sacrifice. They expressed the yearnings of men's hearts after reconciliation with God, and their faith in the ultimate fulfilment of God's promise that the Seed

¹ Numb. xii. 4.

² Lev. ix. 5.

³ Heb. ix. 2-5.

of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It was not however till Jesus Christ came that the full meaning of all that had gone before was seen and understood.

The sacrifices offered under the law of Moses were of three kinds :—

- (i.) { Sin-offerings.
Trespass-offerings.
- (ii.) Burnt-offerings.
- (iii.) { Meat-offerings (unbloody, flour, oil, &c.)
Peace-offerings (bloody).

Now these three kinds of sacrifice represented three distinct ideas.

The first, the *sin* or *trespass-offering*, represented atonement for sin, as though the sin of the offerer was in some mysterious manner transferred to the victim offered. There could under the Law be no remission of sin without the shedding of blood. This was to teach man that sin was a disease of which the repentance of the sinner, though a necessary thing, could not rid him. However earnest and good a man might be, he could not obey God's law perfectly, and therefore the Sacred Scriptures teach us that neither the goodness nor the earnestness could put away his sin. All the sin-offerings under the Law declared plainly that man is unclean, sinful, from his very birth. Hence there must be some means of doing away with this taint of man's nature, and consequent inability to do God's will perfectly. God ordained that this should be effected by a Divine sacrifice in the fulness of time. When made and accepted this sacrifice would establish a new relation between God and man. Meantime the sin-offering under the Law only set this forth, typified it. It availed to remove

ceremonial defilement—that which separated the Israelite from the Sanctuary ; but the sin of the conscience, which separated man from God, it could not remove. That could only be expiated by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the Cross. “ He suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” The sin-offering therefore represented the expiation or atonement for sin wrought by the Death of Jesus Christ.

The second kind of offerings were *burnt-offerings*, and these represented the surrender of the offerer's will to God's will. Of this kind were the sacrifices of the Patriarchs ; but when the Law came, bringing with it the knowledge of sin, the burnt-offering might not be offered until after the sin-offering had been made. No other sacrifice would be accepted by God until atonement for sin had been made. This done, the offerer must be ready to submit himself entirely to God ; and this readiness was testified by the burnt-offering: The only perfect example of this submission to God's will, and of entire obedience, is our Lord Jesus Christ. He surrendered His human will entirely and wholly to the will of His heavenly Father. So that the burnt-offering of the pious Israelite was a type and shadow of the “perfect sinless obedience and self-dedication to God” of Jesus Christ. And if so, it also represented the obedience of all Christ's disciples to God ; and obedience means on our part repentance and sorrow for sin going before. This is precisely what we are taught in our Catechism. For all who have been baptized, and thus brought into covenant with God, through Jesus Christ, “the Mediator,” are required, as a condition of their reaping the benefit of the covenant, to repent of their sins, to have faith in God's mercy through Christ, and

to obey God's Holy Will and Commandments. In the same manner also the Apostle exhorts us "to present ourselves to God, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Him."

The third kind of offering was the *peace-offering*. It was the thanksgiving of a thankful heart. For of it, "part God had, and part the offerer ate, in sign of perfect peace and reconciliation."¹ Of the peace-offering only might the offerer himself partake. He was allowed to eat by far the larger part with his family and friends. Hence the offerer communicated, as it were, with God, by eating part of that which had been offered to Him, and with his fellow-men, by sharing his portion of the offering with them. The peace-offering thus becomes to us a very exact type and representation of the Holy Communion. For Jesus Christ, Who "made peace by the Blood of the Cross,"² is our true peace-offering. Only in Him can we have peace with God. And in the Holy Communion we are invited to feed on Jesus Christ. It is the Communion of His Body and Blood ;³ in it, we not only pray "that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood," but that "we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us." We eat then our Peace-offering, and thus have communion with God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Moreover, as the Israelite offerer called upon his friends to share with him in the joyful meal, and thus be animated by the same spirit as himself, so we Christians have in the Holy Communion, as partakers of the same Body and Blood, communion one with another, and are animated by the sense of a

¹ Bishop Andrewes.

² Col. i. 20.

³ 1 Cor. x. 16.

common bond, the possession of the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Mosaic peace-offering therefore teaches us one other lesson. It was the last of the sacrifices offered, always coming after the other two, and yet equally necessary, equally commanded. Without it, the whole idea of the sacrifice would have been incomplete. So it is with the Christian. Christ has died for us ungodly ; He has set us an example of perfect obedience ; He is our peace-offering. But we do not accept Him as this last unless we have Communion with Him in the Lord's Supper. Unless we do this our whole life as Christians is deprived of what should be its true joy and crown. Let this be laid to heart by those who are about to be confirmed.

To sum up then ;—the three kinds of Mosaic sacrifice represented and typified—

- (1.) The expiation or atonement for sin wrought by Jesus Christ in His death upon the Cross.
- (2.) The perfect obedience and surrender of His Human will to the will of His Heavenly Father, and the consequent surrender required of us of our wills to God's will.
- (3.) The Communion of Christians with God and with one another through the true Peace-offering Jesus Christ.

Thus we see very clearly how our Blessed Lord united in Himself every kind of sacrifice. No one sacrifice under the Mosaic Law could have done this. Hence three were necessary. But they all pointed to the same end ; they were all a shadow of the Good Thing which was to come.

This lesson would be incomplete without a reference specially to the observances of the *Great Day of*

Atonement. The observances of that day are full of meaning, "On the day appointed for this general expiation, the priest is commanded to offer a bullock and a goat, as sin-offerings, the one for himself and the other for the people ; and, having sprinkled the blood of these in due form before the mercy-seat, to lead forth a second goat, denominated the scape-goat, and after laying both his hands upon the head of the scape-goat, and confessing over him all the iniquities of the people, to put them upon the head of the goat, and to send the animal, thus bearing the sins of the people, away into the wilderness."¹

This act of the high priest was to be repeated every year on the same day. The repetition, as in the case of the daily and other sacrifices, pointed clearly to the incompleteness and insufficiency of what was offered. It pointed to a complete and all-sufficient sacrifice to come, of which itself was merely a type or shadow. It typified the offering of Jesus Christ. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. But one goat could not convey both these ideas. Hence there must be two ; one to denote the sacrifice made for sin, and the other to shadow forth its being transferred and carried away from the sinner. Thus the second goat was not a separate observance, but a distinct part of the same sacrifice. Moreover the high priest, on this one day in the whole year, entered the "Most Holy Place," carrying with him the blood of the bullock, and of the slain ram, and the smoking incense, typical of the offering of Christ's prayer for His people. Thus the whole observance was typical of Jesus Christ, Who "by one offering hath perfected for ever them

¹ See Lev. xvi.

that are sanctified." He has no need to offer often, as the high priest; for as our High Priest He has entered in once for all into the holy place, ever living to make intercession by His own blood for the sins of the world.

Some of the ancient Israelites (we may believe) understood the typical character of their tabernacle services. And even if they failed to do so, they yet grasped very distinctly that the real efficacy of their sacrifices lay in the spirit with which they were offered. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."¹ "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit."² "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."³ These were the utterances of all the best and most spiritual amongst the Israelite people.⁴

And Jesus Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount, taught the same thing. So it becomes very clear to us that these sacrifices and observances of the Mosaic Law were only shadows or forecasts of the future. When they were ordained, men were not ready for that future; but at last they were, and then they were really and truly fulfilled in our Blessed Lord. He did not destroy what had gone before. He fulfilled it. He was the true Pattern to which all the Mosaic Law and ritual pointed. They were but faint outlines and dim shadowings forth, types and shadows, of the Truth;—Jesus Christ was THE TRUTH itself.

¹ 1 Sam. xv. 22.

² Psa. li. 17.

³ Micah vi. 8

⁴ Isa. i. 10-20; Jer. vii. 22, 23; Ps. xl. 6-8.

LESSON X.

THE PROMISE TO DAVID—THE MESSIANIC TEACHING OF ISAIAH, HOSEA, ETC.

The Promise to David.

Read 2 Sam. vii. ; 1 Kings viii. 16-20 ; 1 Chron. xvii., xxii. 6-10,
xxviii. 1-10.

FROM the death of Moses until the reign of David no advance was made in the idea of a Messiah. There was no further revelation.

But not very long after he became king over all Israel, David, struck by the apparent inconsistency between his own palace of cedar and the curtained dwelling of the Ark of God, was fired with an earnest longing to erect a fitting house for "God to dwell in." The prophet Nathan, to whom David confided his plan, entered into it heartily, and bade the king "God speed." A message from God, however, conveyed through the very same prophet, restrained David from the execution of his design. At the same time a consolatory promise was given to him. This promise marks an era in Messianic prophecy.

The promise to David was threefold: (1) God would build David a house, and establish him a throne and a kingdom which should last for ever. (2) David's son should build the house for God which

David himself might not build. The throne of his kingdom should be established for ever. (3) God would be the Father of David's Son.

This promise received its first fulfilment in Solomon. "The Lord hath performed His word that He spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel as the LORD promised, and have built an house for the Name of the LORD God of Israel."¹ At some later time than the first giving of the promise, God had specially named Solomon to David—"Solomon thy son he shall build My house, and My courts: for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father."²

But the very terms of the promise must have prepared David for a higher and future fulfilment. His idea in proposing to build a house for God was entirely connected with the material building. The promise of God to build him an house when he was already dwelling in a palace of cedar must, no doubt, at once have suggested to him that God would make him the ancestor of a family which should have a special Divine blessing. This must have been his first thought. But behind the mere building of wood and stone, behind even the idea of a flourishing family of descendants, there lay the thought of a spiritual building, a building of the bodies and souls of men, which in the end, in the thoughts and utterances of an Apostle, entirely absorbed and overcame the idea of a material temple.³

Again, in the promise of a kingdom which should

¹ 1 Kings viii. 20; 1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10.

² 1 Chron. xxviii. 6.

³ Eph. ii. 19, 22; 1 Peter ii. 5; cp. also Numb. xii. 7, where we have the first intimation of the spiritual meaning of the word "house."

last for ever, David could not fail to see that there was a reaching onward, far beyond his own time or that of his son Solomon. And in the relation of father and son there was wrapt up some deeper truth than that of which Solomon could possibly be the exponent.

We are thus prepared to find that David, as both our Lord¹ and St. Peter² teach us, realized the higher and more spiritual side of the Promise. He understood too the real Sonship of the expected Christ, and foresaw that a kingdom which should last for ever must be ruled over by One Who should not be subject to corruption, by One therefore Who should rise again :³—for that He should be “brought into the dust of death” was also revealed to him (Ps. xvi.). Hence the promise was really fulfilled in its highest sense in Jesus Christ. Of Him the angel in announcing His birth, said, that “He shall be called the Son of the Highest : and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David : and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.”⁴ Of Him in truth the Psalmist sang, as the Epistle to the Hebrews assures us, in the words, “Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.”⁵ Of Him too, as the same Epistle tells us, David, having in his mind God’s promise, speaks in the second Psalm, “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.”⁶

The promise therefore to David advanced the idea of the Messiah in these ways—(1) It limited the line of the Messiah to the family of David ; and so (2) it

¹ Matt. xxii. 34-46.

² Acts ii. 30-34.

³ Ps. xvi. 10.

⁴ Luke i. 31-33.

⁵ Ps. cx. 1 ; Heb. i. 13.

⁶ Ps. ii. 7 ; Heb. i. 5.

taught His Kingship. But (3) in the continual endurance of the Kingdom, and of the House, were to be seen their spiritual nature ; and thus (4) the true Sonship, the Divinity of the Messiah, was set forth.¹

The Messianic Teaching of Isaiah.

Read especially Isa. ii. 1-4, iv., vii. 10-16, ix. 1-7, xi. 1-10, xiii. xxv. 6-9, xxvi., xxxii., xxxv., xl. 1-8, xlii. 1-4, | xlix. 1-12, l. 5-9, lii. 13, liii., lv., lix. 19-21, lx., lxi., lxiii., lxv. 17-25.

The age of Isaiah saw a great impulse given to the prophetic teaching respecting the Messiah. The promise made to David, the effect of which upon his mind is evident in so many of the Psalms, now received that enlargement and illustration for which it had waited through three centuries.

The principal points in which Isaiah added to the already existing Messianic prophecy were these—(1) The announcement of a forerunner ; (2) the Birth from a Virgin ; (3) the anointing by the Holy Ghost ; (4) Isaiah greatly enlarged upon the ministry and work of the Messiah, and (5) upon His *victory through suffering* ; (6) His Resurrection and return to judgment ; (7) the gift of the Holy Ghost to His disciples ; and (8) the great Restitution of all things.

He does not add to the earlier prophecies respecting the Kingship of Christ, though he speaks of a King reigning in righteousness (xxxii. 1), nor yet to those concerning the admission of the Gentiles into the blessings of the Covenant, although he does speak of Jehovah's Servant being a light to the Gentiles, and His salvation unto the ends of the earth.

¹ The following passages, as illustrating the promise, should be read:—Zech. vi. 12, 13 ; John ii. 20, 21 ; Eph. i. 20-22 ; 1 Thess. iii. 15 ; Heb. iii. 5, 6.

1. *The prophecy of a Forerunner* (Isa. xl. 3-11). Already the descent, the office, and work of the Messiah had been foretold, but it was reserved for Isaiah to declare that the advent of the Messiah, the coming of the Servant of Jehovah, would be preceded by a herald. The duty of this herald should be to declare the near approach of Him Who should restore the power of God in men's hearts. He must prepare men for the reception of the Messiah by "making a highway for God, exalting the valleys, lowering the mountains and hills, straightening the crooked, smoothing the rough." And that St. John the Baptist did fulfil this prophetic announcement of his office is distinctly stated by St. Matthew. The burden of his preaching was *Repentance*. The best preparation for the Messiah's Kingdom, and the only real claim for admittance into it, must be change of heart. The winnowing fan of Him Who was coming after him, and Who was preferred before him, would, the Baptist declared, sift thoroughly the motives and actions of men. The Baptist, in seeking to give those who flocked to his teaching a true conception of the office of the coming Messiah, and of His Person, gave them the means of appreciating rightly all that was written in the prophets and in the Psalms of Him.

2. *The Birth of the Messiah from a Virgin* (Isa. vii. 10-16). The actual line of Messiah's descent had been already distinctly foretold. Isaiah himself reiterates promises of God already made, when he speaks of the rod coming forth of the stem of Jesse, and the Branch growing out of his roots.¹ But he goes beyond this. The actual birth of the Messiah shall be wonderful.

¹ Isa. xi. 1.

He shall be indeed the Son of David, but His descent shall be reckoned through a pure Virgin mother. No earthly father should be able to claim Him for his actual Son. God should be His Father. His Name should be Immanuel. He should be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." And so it was. The word of the Lord as spoken by the prophet was fulfilled, as St. Matthew tells us, in Jesus Christ.¹

3. *The Unction of the Messiah by the Holy Ghost; His Office as Prophet* (Isa. xlii. 1-4, lxi. 1-3). These two passages were a further step in advance of former prophecies. Now for the first time we read of the actual gifts and offices bestowed upon the Messiah through the work of the Holy Ghost. The Name "My Servant" (xlii. 1) may undoubtedly be referred in the first instance to the nation of Israel,² which was a type of Christ. But St. Matthew appropriates the Name and the whole passage to our Lord,³ Who Himself declared, when preaching at Nazareth, that the Scripture He had just read to them (Isa. lxi. 1-3) was at that very moment "fulfilled in their ears," and in His own Person.⁴ The fulfilment of the prophecy was visibly accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Jesus Christ at His Baptism.⁵ The work to which He was anointed was a purely spiritual one. The heart bruised by sin, and contrite, was to look to Him; the smoking flax of faith's small beginnings were to be kindled by Him into a living flame of love and devotion; Satan's captives were to be released from

¹ Matt. i.; cp. Luke i. 31-35.

² Cp. Exod. iv. 22; Hos. xi. 1.

³ Matt. xii. 18-20.

⁴ Luke iv. 16-21.

⁵ Matt. iii. 17; Luke iii. 22; John i. 33, 34.

their bondage ; the mourner was to be comforted ; the acceptable rest of the Eternal Jubilee to be preached.

4. *The Ministry and Work of the Messiah.* These had as yet been foretold in barest outline. The outline is filled in by Isaiah with considerable detail. In chapter ix. 1, 2, the ministry in Galilee, as St. Matthew teaches us,¹ is foretold. In chapter xxxv. 5, 6, His miracles of mercy are described—the eyes of the blind opened, the ears of the deaf are unstopped, the lame man leaping as an hart, the tongue of the dumb singing.² In the rejoicing of the desert, and its blossoming as a rose (xxxv. 1), we hear beforehand Christ's invitation to the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him for rest and refreshment ;³ in the invitation to every thirsty one to come to the waters (lv. 1), we are reminded of His call, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink ;"⁴ in the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree coming up instead of the thorn and the briar (lv. 13), there is pictured forth the new birth of the Spirit.⁵ Moreover, in those tender and beautiful words in which he foretells of Christ's pastoral care (xl. 11), Isaiah but gives us beforehand a description of Him Who declared Himself to be the Good Shepherd Which giveth His life for the sheep.

5. *The Messiah must be victorious through suffering* (chap. lii. 13, liii.). We have seen that the very first announcement of a Messiah, when God promised a seed to Eve, involved the idea of suffering.⁶ But this passage of Isaiah unfolds the idea more completely. "It is the unravelling of Ps. xxii. and Ps. cx. It . . . is

¹ Matt. iv. 15, 16.

² Cp. Matt. xi. 5.

³ Matt. xi. 28-30.

⁴ John vii. 37.

⁵ John iii. 5 ; cp. Rom. vi. 19.

⁶ Gen. iii. 15 ; cp. Gen. xxii. ; Deut. xviii. 15 ("like unto me") ; Ps. xxii.

the most central, the deepest, and the loftiest thing that the Old Testament prophecy, outstripping itself, has ever achieved.”¹ By Jew and Christian alike it is allowed that in this passage we have the prediction of the sufferings and death, and then passage to glory, of the Messiah. In many places in the New Testament allusions to and quotations from this prophecy are made. It is regarded as fulfilled in Christ. “In this prophecy Isaiah speaks so plainly of Christ, that he seems to perform the part of an evangelist rather than of a prophet.”²

Opening with the assertion that in all His sufferings the Servant of Jehovah acts according to God’s will (deals prudently), and sketching the result as seen in His Resurrection (exalted), Ascension (extolled), and Session (be very high) at God’s Right Hand, the prophet passes on to describe very minutely the appearance of Messiah (lii. 14, liii. 2), His poor outward circumstances (the root out of a dry ground), His rejection by His people (liii. 3, 4), His sufferings for them (liii. 5, 6), His patience (liii. 7), His trial and death (liii. 8), and His burial (liii. 9). All this happened unto Him, because Jehovah has “made Him an offering for sin.” It results in His triumphant victory, for “He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied” (liii. 11). He becomes the Mediator and Intercessor. He is the true High Priest, offering up Himself. “He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

6. *The victory of Messiah, His Resurrection and return to judgment* (Isa. lxiii. 1-6). Edom, in the prophetic language, is the type of the enemies of God

¹ Hengstenberg.

² Jerome, quoted by Bp Wordsworth.

in their worst and most virulent form. "Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?"¹ had been already the cry of the Psalmist. The strongholds of Edom taken, the chiefest, bitterest foes will be overcome. By His descent into hell, and His Resurrection from the dead, our Lord subdued His and our great spiritual foes. But the final judgment upon them is reserved until the last day. This passage, therefore, represents to us under the image of the Victorious One coming from 'Bozrah' (a chief fastness of Edom), with His threat of vengeance against His foes, (1) The Resurrection, and return to His disciples, of Jesus Christ after His Passion and Death, with the visible marks of His sufferings yet upon His garments.² But (2) regarding the blood-stains upon the Conqueror's garments as not His own, but that of His enemies, we have here the signs of the Redeemer's wrath—"the wrath of the Lamb"—upon those enemies. And thus there is shadowed forth Christ's Second Advent, in imagery borrowed long afterwards by St. John, when he describes the Victor as having on His vesture and on His thigh His Name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."³ In the Psalms⁴ we have already had a prophetic announcement of the Second Advent, and of the coming to judgment, but not in the same clear and precise language as here. We are sensible of a further lifting of the veil.⁵

¹ Ps. lx. 8.

² In this sense our Church appoints this passage for the Epistle on the Monday before Easter. Cp. Col. ii. 14.

³ Rev. xix. 11-16; cp. Rev. xiv. 19, 20. ⁴ See esp. Ps. ii. 9, 12; cx.

⁵ This blending together of two distinct events is not without its parallel in our Lord's discourse in Matt. xxiv.

7. *The promise of the Holy Spirit* (Isa. xxxii. 15, xlv. 3, lix. 19-21). The work of the Holy Spirit had from very early times been recognized in the spiritual government of men. Later on, the possession of His gifts and graces was felt by David to be the only real stay of his spiritual life. His fervent prayer was, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." And Solomon represents the Divine Wisdom as promising to pour out Her Spirit upon the penitent soul.¹ But that universal gift of the Holy Spirit of which Isaiah and his probable contemporary Joel speak,² was to be the result of Messiah's work and the consequence of His victory. And St. John teaches us³ by his explanation of our Lord's words at the Feast of Tabernacles, that such promises as are found in Isa. xii. 3, xxxv. 7, xlv. 3, lv. 1, are in truth promises of the gifts of the Spirit, which, poured out without measure upon the Servant of Jehovah, overflow to the assuaging the spiritual thirst of all who will come unto Him.

8. *Further results of Messiah's sufferings and victory.* These are portrayed with especial vividness and beauty by Isaiah. They occur on almost every page of his book. How beautiful is that description of the highway along which nothing unclean passes, but which leads the ransomed of the Lord to Zion,⁴ that strong city whose walls and bulwarks are salvation.⁵ How comforting the assurance, beyond which the Apostle of the Revelation could not go, that God "will swallow up death in victory," and "wipe away tears from off all faces."⁶ And how solemn those other

¹ Prov. i. 23.² Joel ii. 28³ John vii. 38, 39.⁴ Isa. xxxv. 8-10.⁵ Isa. xxvi. 1.⁶ Isa. xxv. 8; cp. 1 Cor. xv. 54; Rev. xxi. 4.

words in which the prophet, in closing the long roll of his prophecy, utters the condemnation which in the end shall overtake the enemies of Jehovah: "Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched."¹

The Messianic teaching of Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Micah.

Read especially—Hosea vi., xi., xiii.; Joel ii.; Amos ix.; Micah ii., iv., v., vii.

Contemporary with, or even earlier than Isaiah,² these four prophets, commissioned by God to denounce the sins of their nation, to threaten judgment, and to hold out the hope of pardon and restoration to the faithful and the penitent, gave utterance to words which were full of Messianic meaning, and which were, as St. Peter says, "as a light that shineth in a dark place."³ They themselves sought diligently as to what the Spirit testified, when using them as His instruments, "concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." They knew that in what they said they were ministering not so much to themselves as to those who should live when Messiah had come.⁴ They wrote in times of national apostasy, and therefore of national depression. Their mission was too often only one of rebuke. But the Holy Spirit taught them to look on to brighter times, when the promises made to Abraham and David should be fulfilled, when there should be restoration and peace. We do not find in them that intense expression of personal joy and sorrow which is so conspicuous in

¹ Isa. lxvi. 24.

² See Chronological Table at end of Part III.

³ 2 Pet. i. 19.

⁴ See 1 Pet. i. 11, 12.

David's Psalms. His own life, with its changes and vicissitudes, was the groundwork, if so we may speak, of his Messianic utterances. In his utterances there is no thought of national ruin or disaster; no note of restoration or return. The kingdom is in its strength; what more could David wish than that it should so continue? With the prophets it is different. Their yearnings are for the future, which shall bring with it renewed joy.

HOSEA looks forward to a time of restoration, when his now erring countrymen shall "seek after the Lord their God, and David their King."¹ Israel, with Hosea, is sometimes a type of Christ.² Its repentance and conversion is the symbol of Christ's Resurrection.³

JOEL is the prophet of judgment. But he tells of the "Teacher of Righteousness"⁴ sent by Jehovah; and announces a great outpouring of the Holy Ghost, which came on the Day of Pentecost.⁵

AMOS reiterates the promise given to David. His message is one of woe and sorrow. Israel—the ten tribes—should be extinguished as a nation, and carried into captivity, sifted as corn in a sieve, among all nations. Yet the true grain shall not be lost.⁶ And so there shall be restoration and peace. The prophet's message changes. Israel shall be restored. The hut of David (for it had so shared in the general ruin, that it was no longer as a palace of cedar, but rather as a simple hut or booth [tabernacle], and that, too, a

¹ Hosea iii. 5.

² Hosea xi. 1; cp. Matt. ii. 15.

³ Hosea xiii. 14. St. Paul gives us the correct rendering of this passage in 1 Cor. xv. 55.

⁴ Such is the true rendering of Joel ii. 23.

⁵ Acts ii.

⁶ Amos ix. 9.

fallen one) shall be re-erected. St James, in his speech in the council,¹ tells us how and when this promise of restoration began to be fulfilled. The hut of David was rebuilt in Jesus Christ. When He came, Israel's restoration—a spiritual restoration, higher and better than a material one—began. In St. Peter's visit to Cornelius Israel had commenced to take possession of "the remnant of Edom," or in the words of the paraphrase, adopted by St. James from the LXX. version, it was then that "the residue of men" began "to seek after the Lord."

MICAH foretells the Messiah, as both Jew and Gentile expositors allow, in the person of the "Breaker-up,"² Who delivers His people from their prison-house. Christ has delivered His people from the bondage of Satan, and has "opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers." The peaceful gathering of believers to the spiritual Zion is described in the opening of chapter iv.

Micah names the place of Messiah's birth,³ as his contemporary Isaiah declares His parentage. And yet more, Micah, like Isaiah, declares the eternal existence of Him Who is to appear as the Messiah. He shall indeed go forth from Bethlehem, but that is not the beginning of His existence. "His goings forth have been from everlasting."⁴ "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

¹ Acts xv. 13-18.

² Micah ii. 13.

³ Micah v. 2; cp. Matt. ii. 6; John vii. 42. The passage in St. Matthew is a paraphrase of, not an exact quotation from, the original. It expresses the same truth, but from a rather different side.

⁴ Micah v. 2.

LESSON XI.

THE MESSIANIC TEACHING OF JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL.

Read especially—Jer. i., iii., ix., xi., xii., xxii., xxiii., xxx—xxxiii.; Ezek. i. 1-3, xiv., xviii., xxiv. 15-24, xxxiv., xxxvi., xxxvii., xlii. 1-4, xlvii. 1-12, xlviii. 35.

OF the remaining prophets who exercised their office before the last days of the kingdom of Judah, there are three who give notes of Messianic teaching. OBADIAH, prophesying in the early years of the Captivity, and pointing to the time of Christ, speaks of deliverance and holiness upon Mount Zion, and of the coming up of Saviours on it.¹ In his prophecy, "the kingdom shall be the Lord's," he anticipates the angel's announcement to Mary,² and the song of those great voices in heaven which cry, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ."³ JONAH in his own person, as our Lord Himself teaches us, is a type of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁴ NAHUM, in describing the joy which would be in Jerusalem at the destruction of Sennacherib and Nineveh, repeats from Isaiah words which reach far beyond their first and primary fulfilment. They are quoted by St. Paul as

¹ Obad. 17-21; cp. 1 Tim. iv. 16; James v. 20.

² Luke i. 33.

³ Rev. xi. 15, xix. 6.

⁴ Jonah i. 17, ii.; Matt. xii. 40, xvi. 4; Luke xi. 30.

prophetic of the Gospel times ;—"Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."¹

The last days of the kingdom of Judah, and the times of the Captivity, are illustrated by the utterances of three great prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

The Messianic Teaching of Jeremiah.

I. The first of these, JEREMIAH, was himself a living prophecy. Of all the Old Testament saints none, as Jeremiah, experienced sufferings so closely corresponding to those of Jesus Christ. Driven from his native city Anathoth, as Christ from Nazareth, by the animosity of the inhabitants, he speaks of himself as "like a lamb brought to the slaughter."² His inward struggles, as recorded in chapters xii. and xx., seem to foreshadow faintly the Agony in the Garden. The jest of the crowd, the sport of princes, rejected by the men of his own generation, and lamenting over the city which had treated him so cruelly, Jeremiah is a conspicuous type of Jesus Christ. We may pursue the parallel further. Called to the prophetic office while still a child, Jeremiah had the same early belief, as Jesus had, in his Divine mission.³ In his protests against the sins of both priests and prophets, the woes pronounced by our Lord against the Scribes and Pharisees are in a manner anticipated.⁴ Moreover, as for the joy set before Him, Jesus Christ endured the Cross and despised the shame, so His type, Jeremiah, amidst all his sufferings, was sustained by the

¹ Nah. i. 15 ; Isa. lii. 7 ; Rom. x. 15.

³ Cp. Jer. i. 6 ; Luke ii. 49.

² Jer. xi. 19 ; cp. Isa. liii. 7.

⁴ Cp. ix. ; Jer. xxiii.

thought of future salvation,¹ and that not for Israel alone, but for Gentiles as well.²

Repeating earlier prophecies, Jeremiah frequently announces Messiah's descent from David, and as Isaiah specially brings out the Priesthood of Christ, so Jeremiah, evidencing thereby his minute acquaintance with earlier Scriptures, and in full keeping with a time of monarchical decadence, dwells particularly upon the Royalty and Kingship of Christ.³

In one remarkable passage, intended to convey comfort to the gathered remnant of the exiled people, Jeremiah proclaims the Divinity of Messiah. He is "Jehovah our Righteousness," a name which St. Paul seems to have had in his mind when he speaks of "Christ being made unto us . . . righteousness,"⁴ and as being "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."⁵

Once more, in his prophecy of the sorrow and weeping which should prevail when the Chaldæans should come down for their final attack upon Jerusalem, and should slaughter in their furious cruelty the inhabitants of the surrounding country, Jeremiah was in truth prophesying, as St. Matthew tells us, of a still more distant time, when the cry of the Holy Innocents, murdered for the sake of Jesus Christ, should rise up to heaven against the wicked and suspicious Herod.⁶

But there are three points of Messianic teaching which Jeremiah brings out with special prominence.

(1) He announces a coming time when, in the presence of a more personal manifestation of God, and

¹ Cp. Jer. xvii.

² Jer. xlv. 26, xlviii. 47, xlix. 6.

³ Jer. xxii. 4, xxiii. 5; cp. Isa. liii. 11.

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁵ Rom. x. 4.

⁶ Jer. xxxi. 15; Matt. ii. 17, 18.

a more intimate union between Jehovah and His people, the Ark, with the Divine Shechinah enthroned between the Cherubim, and which had been for so many centuries the centre of national hope and longing, should neither be remembered nor visited any more.¹ The prophecy was fulfilled. When once destroyed, the Ark was never re-constructed. There was no Ark in the second Temple. Its glory had gone. Henceforth they must look for some other way in which they might enjoy the Presence of God amongst them. They shall do so. Jerusalem shall be "the Throne of Jehovah." But they must share their spiritual privileges with the Gentiles; for all nations shall be gathered unto Jerusalem. The Presence came with Jesus Christ, and ever abides. "Lo, I am with you alway." Christ hath passed indeed into the Heavens, but they who believe and trust in Him have "come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem."²

(2) Jeremiah foretells a New Covenant in the place of the Old, which shall be richer in spiritual gifts and graces.³ The New Covenant would not change the relation in which God stood to His people. Under both Covenants He is a God of loving-kindness and tender mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. But the way in which the relationship would be manifested would be changed. In this would consist the New Covenant. "Ye are not come unto the Mount which burned with fire,"⁴ The New Covenant was not to be one of continual sacrifices "which could never take away sin." The Law was to be written, not

¹ Jer. iii. 14-17 ; cp. John i. 14.

³ Jer. xxxi. 31-34.

² Heb. xii. 22.

⁴ Heb. xii. 18.

on stone, but in the hearts of the people.¹ The teaching should be no longer human, but Divine. Human instruments might, and would, still be used by God, but the real teacher would be the Holy Spirit. "Thy children," Isaiah had already said, "shall be all taught of God,"² and our Lord afterwards confirmed the words. The Holy Ghost should be the guide into all truth. Just as St. Paul says, "Ye are our epistle . . . an epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God."³

(3) Jeremiah prophesies of the perpetuity of the priests and Levites, connecting it closely with the promise that "David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel."⁴ This latter was an old promise made, as we have seen, to David, and to be interpreted, as the Angel teaches us (Luke i. 33), of Jesus Christ, the Eternal King, Who reigns for ever and ever. Hence the promise of perpetuity to "the priests and the Levites" must have an equally spiritual and, so to speak, Messianic meaning. With the abolition indeed of the Ark, the centre of their worship, the reason for the existence of priests and Levites ceased really to be. We have therefore in Jeremiah's words (*a*) a prophecy of a new order of men who should take the place of the ancient priests and Levites, set apart under Christ their great Shepherd to execute until the end of the world the office of Shepherds and Ministers to His people. But (*b*), in a still higher sense, we have here a prophecy of the realisation of Moses' promise to the Israelites, that they should be unto God "a

¹ Heb. viii. 10.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.

² Isa. liv. 13; John vi. 45.

⁴ Jer. xxxiii. 14-26.

kingdom of priests,"¹ a promise which, as St. Peter tells us, is fulfilled in the Christian Church: for "ye are a royal priesthood."² Jeremiah's words find their real echo in the words of St. John to the Seven Churches, and in the new song of the living creatures and of the elders, "Thou hast made us kings and priests unto God."³

The Messianic Teaching of Ezekiel.

As Jeremiah's ministry in the Holy Land was drawing to a close, the priest EZEKIEL, one of the Jewish captives living on the banks of the Chebar,⁴ received his mission. What Jeremiah was to the people left behind in Jerusalem, that Ezekiel was to the people transplanted to Chaldæa. Neither portion of God's people were left without their prophet. And by his inspiration Ezekiel was able to keep the exiles informed of what was passing at their old home. Ezekiel's mission was to the rebellious and hard-hearted house of Israel. He was assured of his mission by a vision of the glory of the Lord, which, having departed from the Temple at Jerusalem, was seen by Ezekiel beside the Chebar.

Ezekiel's prophecies are full of fire and energy and wonderful imagery. In strictly Messianic prophecy he does not add much to his predecessor's words. Like them he prophesies of the Divine Shepherd,⁵ Who should seek the lost and bind up the broken.⁶ Like them, he predicts the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,⁷

¹ Exod. xix. 6.

² 1 Peter ii. 9.

³ Rev. i. 6, v. 10.

⁴ Either a tributary of the Euphrates, or one of the large canals of Babylonia.

⁵ Ezek. xxxiv. 11-23.

⁶ Cp. Isa. lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18.

⁷ Ezek. xxxvi. 25-28, xxxix. 29.

and the union and restoration of Israel under David their prince for ever. And as Jeremiah had spoken of a New Covenant, and of the Ark with all its furniture becoming obsolete, so Ezekiel says that this New Covenant shall be an everlasting Covenant of peace, and that the Tabernacle of God shall be with them.¹ In the vision of the valley of dry bones² restored to life and movement, Ezekiel gives us a more vivid picture than any before him of Israel's restoration, of the necessity of spiritual awakening from trespasses and sins, and of the final resurrection of the dead.

But that which distinguishes Ezekiel, beyond all the prophets before him, is his teaching of personal responsibility, which anticipates with no uncertain sound the teaching of the New Testament. In this respect he is truly Messianic. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wicked man, turning away from his wickedness, and doing that which is lawful and right, shall save his soul alive."³ "Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die?" Ezekiel's standpoint was in truth different from that of his predecessors. They prophesied with Temple and kingdom still standing. While these existed, degraded and defiled as they might be, there was a hope that they by repentance and cleansing might be reinstated in their former position; and there was nothing, so long as David's descendants ruled, to throw doubt upon the promise made to him. But when Ezekiel prophesied all was changed. Temple and monarchy had alike been swept away. The only hope was in

¹ Ezek. xxxvii. 26, 27.

² Ezek. xxxvii. 1-14.

³ Ezek. xviii. ; cp. 1 John i. 8.

the future. And the only hope for that future was in the repentance of each individual soul of its own sin. By not mourning for the death of his wife, who was yet very dear to him,¹ Ezekiel signified to his fellow-captives that it was not for the captured city of Jerusalem that they were to mourn, but for their own sins. "Ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one towards another."²

And as Ezekiel thus laid stress on personal holiness, there was vouchsafed to him a wondrous vision of the future, a vision of a restored Temple, with the Glory of God returning to it from the east,³ and the holy waters issuing from the Temple, bringing life to everything on their banks, emblematical of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.⁴ This renewed Temple shall never be defiled, for it stands in the midst of the city whose name is "The Lord is there."⁵ Thus Ezekiel closes his prophecy of the glorious future. In later times it was to be taken up and enlarged by St. John in his vision of the New Jerusalem, with the Lord God as the Light thereof.

¹ Ezek. xxiv. 15-24.

² Ezek. xxiv. 23.

³ Ezek. xliii. 1-5.

⁴ Ezek. xlvii. 1-12.

⁵ Ezek. xliii. 7, xlviii. 35.

LESSON XII.

THE MESSIANIC TEACHING OF DANIEL, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH AND MALACHI.

Read especially Dan. ii., vii., viii., ix., xii.; Haggai ii. 1-9; Zech. iii., vi. 9-15, ix. 9, xi. 3-14, xii. 9, 10, xiii. 7; and Mal. iii., iv.

The Messianic Teaching of Daniel.

THE last of the three great prophets whose Messianic teaching we are now considering was Daniel. It is as the prophet of "the last things" that Daniel is specially full of interest to us. He foreshortens the whole history of the world to the end of time, and while many of his prophecies have been conspicuously fulfilled, others are still awaiting their accomplishment.

When Daniel entered upon his prophetic office, the prophecies respecting the Messiah were, except in one great particular, complete. His birth and descent had been announced, His sufferings had been plainly revealed; His offices of Prophet, Priest and King, had been distinctly foretold. There remained but to answer the question, which must have often arisen in the heart of the pious Israelite, "When shall these things be?" And the time was now come for an answer to be given. In the earlier prophecies, the Coming of the Messiah, and the Return from the Captivity, with its accompanying and subsequent blessings, had

been so far blended together as to produce amongst the Jews of the time of the Captivity the belief that the one would be the herald and precursor of the other. But the Captivity was in truth to be but the commencement of a further term of probation for the chosen people. In the removal of God's visible Presence in the Shechinah of Glory they must learn to trust in His spiritual Presence, and to desire all the more earnestly the coming of Immanuel.

Amid the sorrows of the Captivity, and the trouble and distress which was to harass them for so many generations after the return from Babylon, they might lose heart and hope altogether. God sustained them, therefore, with a more particular prophecy of Messiah's time than any they had yet received. Thus the question so anxiously asked was answered. The answer came through Daniel. It came in a threefold manner.

First, The return from the Captivity would not be the signal for Messiah's Coming. There must be many changes and disturbances in the world before the fulness of time should have come. This was signified in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and the first of Daniel's four visions. The great image, whose "brightness was excellent," of the king's dream represented "human empire in its well-proportioned might, as formed in some measure in the image of God." The four beasts of Daniel's vision represent the same empire, but in its other and lower developments—"its brute force," "its wasting power." The dream and the vision mean the same thing. There should be four kingdoms or empires, following each other in succession, of which the first, the head of gold, the lion with eagle's wings, was the Babylonian,

then existing in its full strength. The second was the Medo-Persian, its double nationality, so to speak, represented by the two arms of the image, and the greater power of the Persian element by the bear raised upon one side. The third empire, the Grecian, is represented in its swiftness of conquest by the thighs of the image, and the quick-moving leopard or panther, with its four wings; the animal's four heads denoting the intellectual power of the Greeks. The fourth empire, more powerful and formidable than any of its predecessors, its strength denoted by the iron, and its terribleness so great that no name can be found for the beast which represents it, is the Roman. Upon this last empire the interest centres. It was to have two periods:—one of undoubted strength, represented by the iron legs; the other of division, and therefore of less strength, represented by the mingled iron and clay, the ten toes of the image, the ten horns and the eleventh horn of the fourth beast. For during its rule another kingdom, as a stone cut out without hands, shall be set up by the God of Heaven, before whose power and irresistible might all the former kingdoms or empires shall "become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors." This kingdom shall never be destroyed. Its King is one like the "Son of Man"—of human birth therefore, though not a mere man, for He comes, as God of old came, in the clouds of Heaven.¹ No one has ever doubted but that by this fifth divine kingdom is meant the kingdom of Christ.

¹ See Exod. xiii. 21, 22, xiv. 24, xvi. 10, xl. 34; 1 Kings viii. 10. The high priest plainly understood our Lord as referring to this passage (Matt. xxvi. 64), and as claiming therefore to be the Messiah of Daniel's prophecy.

When the Baptist, and our Lord and His disciples, proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, every one understood the term, for these prophecies of Daniel had made them familiar with it. But Daniel's later visions, as we shall see, foretell plainly that "the time would be long" before this Divine Kingdom should have "broken in pieces and have consumed" all the other kingdoms. Hence the continuance of the fourth empire (as indeed of the other three, Dan. vii. 12), in some form or other, represented by its subdivisions, was to be prolonged. It represents "world-power" as opposed to the Divine, and as such will continue until the full time is come. The prophecies about the first three kingdoms have all been fulfilled. Daniel's second vision¹ of the ram and he-goat, which related to the second and third kingdoms, with its prophecy of Alexander the Great's swift conquests, and of the cruelties and persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Antichrist of the Old Testament, has also been fulfilled. The meaning of the prophecies are made plain by their fulfilment. But much relating to the fourth empire is still in the future. For its explanation we must wait the fulfilment. "Prophecy is given as a witness to God when the time comes, not to enable us to prophesy."

Second, Christ's Kingdom then was not to commence with the return from the Captivity. Yet it should begin within a certain definite time. This was revealed in Daniel's third vision.² The seventy years' Captivity were drawing to an end. Daniel, fulfilling

¹ In the explanation of this second vision, as in his subsequent visions, the ministry of angels is very plainly set forth. Cp. Heb. i. 13.

² Dan. ix.

Jeremiah's prophecy,¹ interceded in prayer for his people, and in answer God again "lifts the veil of the future." Seventy weeks² were determined upon the people (the Jews) and upon the Holy City (Jerusalem). The reckoning was to be "from the going forth of the command to build and restore Jerusalem." There were four edicts³ given with regard to Jerusalem, any one of which corresponds approximately (and that is all the prophecy intends) with the Coming of "Messiah the Prince," which was to be at the end of the sixty-ninth week. In the midst of the seventieth week Messiah was to be cut off—He was to die, that is, a violent death; the sacrifice was to cease, the city and sanctuary were to be destroyed. The edict which agrees most closely with the date of our Lord's death, and with the prophecies, is that of Artaxerxes Longimanus in his seventh year, B.C. 458, when he commissioned Ezra and gave him absolute power to organize the people "according to the law of his God."⁴ Adding to this date 69 weeks, or 483 years, we are brought to A.D. 26, the year in which, according to the received chronology, our Lord began His public ministry.

Third, The last element in the coming of MESSIAH'S Kingdom was this—"The time would be long," even after Messiah came, before all His enemies should be subdued, and His Kingdom be established in its full strength. This was revealed in Daniel's fourth vision. In that vision Christ Himself appeared to the prophet

¹ Jer. xxix. 10-13.

² Weeks of years, 490 years therefore. The key is given in Ezek. iv. 5, 6.

³ Viz., that of Cyrus (Ezra i. 1-4, vi. 3-5), of Darius (Ezra vi. 1-12), of Artaxerxes to Ezra (vii. 11-26) of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah (ii. 1-8).

⁴ Ezra vii. 14.

in wondrous form, even as He appeared to St. John centuries after in the Isle of Patmos. The vision extends through the last three chapters of Daniel's book. The greater portion of it is a prophecy of the contests between Egypt (the King of the South) and Syria (the King of the North), with the evil work of Antiochus Epiphanes. But as in our Lord's discourse, in which He blends together prophecies of the last days of Jerusalem and of the final judgment, so here the prophecy imperceptibly reaches on to the end of time. We have indeed our Lord's own authority for thus regarding it.¹ One part of the prophecy had already been fulfilled in the time of Antiochus, but it was to be again and equally fulfilled, as our Lord teaches us, when the Romans encamped against Jerusalem, and destroyed both city and temple. Then again of the prophecy of "a time, times, and a half" (or three and a half years), there was a first fulfilment in the three and a half years' persecution under Antiochus. But that persecution is only a type of a still more fierce persecution yet awaiting God's Church,² in the last days.

Again, in our Lord's discourse, though the near and the far off are blended together, yet there are parts of it which unmistakeably refer to His Second Coming.³ So in this prophecy of Daniel. We have in chap. xii. 1 that reference to God's Book with which we have already been made familiar in the Pentateuch and the

¹ Cp. Dan. xii. 11; Matt. xxiv. 15.

² The greater fierceness of the persecution seems indicated by the longer time, 1290 days instead of three and a half years, or 1260 days nearly. The more learned teacher may read with interest and advantage Joseph Mede's "*Revelatio Antichristi*," Mede's Works, 1667, p. 717.

³ See especially vv. 36-51.

Psalms,¹ and which evidently points to some future time of trial and judgment.

The most clear and distinct announcement, however, made by this prophecy is that of the resurrection of the dead.² In no other passage of the Old Testament is this great doctrine so plainly revealed. Of its fulfilment our Blessed Lord was the first instance. Nor is this all:—that resurrection is but the prelude to a separation, a judgment. Some shall awake “to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”³ “Then they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” “But of that day and of that hour knoweth no man;” for the Book is sealed even to the time of the end.⁴

The Messianic Teaching of Haggai.

There were three prophets after the return from captivity. The first of these was HAGGAI. His mission was to arouse the flagging energies of the Jews in the rebuilding of the second Temple. He encouraged them with the thought of the glory which awaited this Temple in the future. It might

¹ Exod. xxxii. 32; Ps. lvi. 8, lxix. 28.

² Dan. xii. 2.

³ Cp. John v. 28, 29.

⁴ Daniel unites in his book many varieties of prophecy. It has been well said, “Largest and least, the remote future and the near, the conflict of the evil and the good, and its final issue, man’s free agency and God’s overruling Providence, Judgment, and Mercy, the Death of the Redeemer and His everlasting Kingdom, His presence as Man, yet more than Man, at the right hand of God, the passing away of the Old Covenant and its sacrifices, and the bringing in of the New, forgiveness of sins and the gift of righteousness, are all concentrated in him.”—PUSEY on Daniel, p. 291.

be in the eyes of those who remembered the first Temple "in comparison as nothing;" within it there might be no Ark of the Covenant, no fire from heaven on its altar, no holy oil; without, no visible cloud of glory would rest upon it; yet its glory should excel the glory of the former Temple, for "the Desire of all nations should come" to it. And He came. The prophecy was fulfilled; fulfilled when Simeon took the Infant Jesus into his arms; fulfilled when the Divine Child sat amongst the doctors; fulfilled when the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee healed the sick, and taught the people within the sacred precincts. The coming was the prelude to that second and final shaking of the things of the Old Covenant in which, as the Apostle teaches, the prophecy was to find its complete accomplishment.¹

The Messianic Teaching of Zechariah.

A few months after Haggai, the second of the three prophets, ZECHARIAH received his call. He repeats from Isaiah and Jeremiah the prophecy of Christ as "the BRANCH,"² and from Joel the outpouring of the Holy Spirit;³ and in the crowning of Joshua the high priest with the double crown, we have a symbolic act, prophetic of the union of the Priestly and Kingly Offices in Christ Jesus.⁴ There may be also a prophecy of the remission of sins wrought by Jesus Christ, Who, though He knew no sin, was made sin for us, in the change of Joshua's garments.⁵ To the prophecy of the opened fountain,⁶ there seems a clear

¹ See Heb. xii. 26.

³ Zech. xii. 10; cp. Joel ii. 28.

⁵ Zech. iii.

² Zech. iii. 8, vi. 12.

⁴ Zech. vi. 9-11.

⁶ Zech. xiii. 1.

reference as fulfilled in our Lord in Rev. i. 5.¹ So also when Jesus says, "I and My Father are One," He clearly fulfils the prophecy of "the Man Who is the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts."² Besides these passages there are four others which are distinctly referred to in the New Testament as fulfilled in our Lord. These are the call to the daughter of Jerusalem to rejoice at the advent of her King;³ the slave's price given for the Shepherd, and cast unto the potter;⁴ the mourning of the Jews, and of all His enemies, when they shall understand the sin they have committed, as "they look upon Him Whom they have pierced," when He cometh with the clouds;⁵ and the call to smite the Shepherd and scatter the sheep⁶ mentioned by Christ Himself.

The Messianic Teaching of Malachi.

MALACHI, the contemporary of Nehemiah, was the last, or "seal," of the prophets. As he warned the people of the consequences which must attend upon their evil ways, he prophesies to them of a coming day of the Lord, a day which should be ushered in with the solemn preparatory notes of the messenger already spoken of by Isaiah.⁷ The mes-

¹ Cp. Heb. ix. 14; 1 Peter i. 19.

² John x. 30; Zech. xiii. 7. "Fellow," i.e. neighbour, in the sense of equality of position.

³ Zech. ix. 9; Matt. xxi. 5; John xii. 15.

⁴ Zech. xi. 12, 13; Exod. xxi. 32; Matt. xxvii. 9, 10. How St. Matthew came to substitute the name of Jeremiah for that of Zechariah it is impossible to say. He may very possibly have been quoting from memory, and thus have made a mistake.

⁵ Zech. xii. 10; John xix. 34, 37; Rev. i. 7.

⁶ Zech. xiii. 7; Matt. xxvi. 31.

⁷ Mal. iii. 1, 2; Matt. xi. 10.

senger, as we know from the New Testament, was John the Baptist, "the Elias who was for to come."¹ The Lord, Whose way he was to prepare, was Jesus Christ Himself, Whose fan was in His hand. But though the day was to begin then, it would not end quickly. It would be, as it were, one long day of the Lord until the Judgment came, when the wicked should be burned as stubble, but upon those who feared God's Name, the Sun of Righteousness should arise with healing in the hem or skirts of His garment.²

Thus the prophetic roll closes. Four centuries and more were to elapse before another prophet's voice should sound, and the Word be made flesh, and dwell among men.

¹ Cp. Mal. iv. 5; Luke i. 17; Mark ix. 11, 12.

² Mal. iv. 1, 2; 2 Peter iii. 7. The "wings" were really the hem or skirt of the raiment. Cp. Mark v. 28.

APPENDIX.

A SHORT TABLE SHOWING THE GRADUAL UNFOLD- ING OF THE MESSIANIC TEACHING.

Centuries before Christ.	MESSIANIC TEACHING.	Passages of Scripture.
XX.	The idea of a Messiah <i>conquering through suffering</i> involved in the first mention of a Redeeming Seed, .	Gen. iii. 15.
	The " <i>rest</i> " as a consequence of the Messiah's victory hinted at in Lamech's speech, .	Gen. v. 29.
	The Messiah's <i>line of descent</i> through Abraham declared, but the blessings to come through Him to be shared by all nations, .	Gen. xii.
	The <i>nature</i> of Messiah's suffering— <i>death</i> —prefigured in the Sacrifice of Isaac, .	Gen. xxii.
XVIII.	The Messiah's <i>line of descent again limited</i> , by Jacob's prophecy, to the family of Judah. His <i>Kingship</i> hinted at, .	Gen. xlix. 10.
XV.	The Messiah's <i>Priesthood</i> and <i>Mediatorship</i> prefigured in the Ordinances of Mount Sinai, as well as the reason of His death as a <i>Sacrifice for Sin</i> more plainly set forth, .	Exodus.
	The Divinity of the Messiah faintly hinted at in Balaam's prophecy of The Star,	Numb. xxiv. 17.
	The Messiah's <i>prophetical</i> office foretold in Moses' promise,	Deut. xviii. 15, 18; Acts iii. 22, vii. 37.

Centuries before Christ.	MESSIANIC TEACHING.	Passages of Scripture.
XI.	The Messiah's descent again limited to family of David. His <i>eternal Kingship</i> plainly revealed, and as a consequence, His <i>eternal Priesthood</i> and His <i>Godhead</i> ,	2 Sam. vii. 13, 16; Ps. ii., lxxii., xvi., cx. Cp. Matt. xxii. 44.
VIII.	The outpouring of the Holy Spirit foretold as a mark of the days of the Messiah,	Joel ii. 28-31; Acts ii. 17.
	The sufferings of the Redeemer as preceding and issuing in His Victory clearly foretold,	Isa. liii.
VII. V.	The importance and dignity of the Messiah's Work marked by the prophecy of a Forerunner,	Isa. xl.; Mal. iii.
VI.	The Coming of the Messiah shall do away with the things of the Old Covenant; The spiritual nature of the Law set forth,	Jer. iii. 14-17.
	MESSIAH becomes at last a proper name for the Redeemer. The <i>time</i> of Messiah's Coming foretold, with the violence of His Death. The spiritual nature of His Kingdom, and its ultimate victory over all the kingdoms of the earth announced,	Dan. ix. 25-27, ii. 44.
	The Resurrection of the Dead, as a consequence of Messiah's Victory, now plainly revealed,	Dan. xii.
VI. V.	Certain details as to Messiah's life on earth prophesied, and a last warning of the Coming to Judgment,	Haggai ii.; Zech. ix-xiii.; Mal. iii., iv.



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